

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

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THE SECOND MRS. TILLOTSON.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "NEVER FORGOTTEN."

BOOK I.

CHAPTER IV. A STORMY CONSULTATION.

On the following morning, when the sun was well up and making the little town glitter in all its points and angles, and when the boots was telling the chambermaid, with whom he was most intimate, how the "gent," who was above, "'ad been turning up his nose" at the best room in "the 'ouse," Mr. Tilney came "swinging" in, bright as the very morning itself. He found that his friend had gone out some time, but was to be back shortly.

"Never mind," said Mr. Tilney, plaintively, as if to deprecate their sending out an immediate express; "never mind. I can wait here quite as well. Here is a paper, and I shall get on very comfortably."

So he did, for he presently found that a "little soda" with a glass of sherry would be "no harm," as he put it, and thus assisted, he did not find the moments tedious.

When Mr. Tillotson came, he seized on him with alacrity. He must come off at once. But Mr. Tillotson had letters, and business. "Look here," he said, gently, showing him accounts, figures, &c., "all this to be got through."

It was agreed, then, that about four o'clock Mr. Tilney should come again, seize on his friend, and bear him off to visit the Tilney family. And at four he did come, and Mr. Tillotson wearily let himself be led away.

"This is our little nook," said Mr. Tilney, stopping to open a wooden gate. "Nothing very pretentious, you see." It was an old grey stone house, of two stories high, and the centre portion projecting beyond the rest. The windows were open, and sounds of voices came from within. But Mr. Tillotson drew back. "It seems there are some people, and I really am not——" But Mr. Tilney had on his overpowering agricultural manner in a moment. He bore down everything, and swept him in with cries as his prototype would have done sheep. The other

submitted, though his heart sank at the notion of society.

There was a little glass hall in front of the hall door, with seats and a few plants. The hall door was always open. As they entered, Mr. Tilney himself drew back. "Don't know that voice," he said.

There were a faded lady and two daughters and two gentlemen sitting there. The gentleman whose voice Mr. Tilney did not know, was still speaking, nor did he stop when they entered. He was a sharp, clean-looking, tall man, with black hair, cut close, and coming down on his forehead like the skull-cap of Leo the Tenth. He continued:

"The whole thing is downright outrageous. I come here by appointment, and Mr. Dawkins here comes here by appointment, and—you see! His own interests are at stake, my interests are at stake. But he does not care. It is weak, immoral—grossly immoral—and," he added, "clinging" the matter, "grossly unbusiness-like."

Mr. Dawkins repeated (baling out water between his knees with his hat) that it was grossly unbusiness-like.

Mrs. Tilney now spoke, as if introducing:

"Mr. Cater, William Ross's solicitor; and Mr. Dawkins"—but Mr. Tillotson himself was passed over, so absorbed were they all.

"Solicitor to the plaintiff, in the ejectment, sir. Come here by appointment," said Mr. Dawkins.

"Our time is very valuable," said Mr. Cater. "But there are people who do not seem to think so."

"Ah, to be sure," said Mr. Tilney, in a loud voice. "And where is Ross? Has he been found? Has he been sent for? Let him be sought for round the town, in several directions."

"We have thought of that long ago," said Mrs. Tilney, languidly. "These gentlemen have been here nearly an hour, and won't take any wine or anything."

"I am afraid, do you know," said Mr. Tilney, gravely, "he is at this moment with some of the wild set from the barracks. Some of them fine young fellows enough, but free, you know. I am told that young Bundoran, Lord Skibbereen's second son, who really being in decent society, and having opportunities——"

"I come down here," said Mr. Cater, in a loud voice, "at great personal inconvenience; so does Mr. Dawkins. It is very strange conduct, very. I was led into the suit by misrepresentation. I pursued it with but one view, that of a fair and profitable compromise. The other side offers that now, and yet this wrong-headed, this insane young man, declines. But I shall insist on it," added Mr. Cater, with great heat.

"We shall be beaten like hacks, if we go on," said his colleague.

During this discussion, Mr. Tillotson, standing irresolutely at the door, turned several times to go, but was firmly restrained by the hand of Mr. Tilney being laid upon his arm in a mysterious and meaning manner. Now he spoke.

"I am afraid," he said, "I am listening to matters of private interest—very unwillingly, I assure you. Mr. Tilney was kind enough to ask me up, but I can come another time."

The two young ladies, who had, indeed, been taking note of the strange gentleman, whom only the warmth of the discussion prevented their rising and welcoming, said, with expostulation, "Mamma! Oh!"

"Mr. Tillotson, my dear," said Mr. Tilney, hastily introducing him. "Sit down there, next to Mrs. Tilney."

"I shall withdraw from the thing," went on the solicitor—"my mind is made up—unless terms are come to; such handsome terms, too. Why, it's insanity!"

"You may say that," said Mr. Tilney, shaking his head. "Why, when one of the Dook's own tradesmen—a saddler fellow—sent in his bill, why, I declare"—here Mr. Tilney interrupted himself, and put the hollow of his hand to his ear with great caution, as if it were a sea-shell—"there he is. I know his step. Yes, it's Ross."

"Ah! well," said the solicitor, half satisfied, "this is something better. But if he don't settle—"

The door was opened sharply, and a young man entered roughly; a young man with great tossed brown hair, and a nose with a very high strong ridge, and an angry, if not habitually sulky, expression. He had his hand up to the side of his cheek, and he stood with his other hand on the door, looking round on the crowd of people.

"Well," he said, "what is all this? What's to do? So you've come down, Cater? I told you you might come, if you liked, but it's no use."

Mr. Tillotson was looking at him earnestly, and with astonishment; so earnestly, that the young man took notice of him, then started a little, and fixed a dogged defiant challenging look on him. Mr. Tilney strode up hastily.

"Let me introduce. Old Sam Lefevre always said, 'Let us know our company, and have done with it.' Mr. Tillotson, Mr. Ross. God bless me! Ross, my boy, what's wrong with your cheek?"

"What's wrong!" said the other, angrily, putting down his hand. "There, look, all of you! A great sight, isn't it? I suppose a man can fall down and cut himself, or a boy in the street throw a stone? Ah! if I catch that boy again, won't I scourge him!"

"Good Heavens! William," cried the girls, "what is it? You are dreadfully hurt!" And indeed he appeared to be, for there was a great purple line running along his cheek up to his ear.

He gave them a look of fury. "Never mind me," he said; "isn't there business going on here? Just leave me alone. That's all."

"I am sorry," said the solicitor, "but we must go into this at once. As I wrote to you, a compromise is offered in your case, now ripe for trial at the present assizes. Mr. Bacon was with me this morning. He offers to share the lands in dispute; that will give over a thousand a year to each party. What on earth drives them to propose such a thing, I cannot conceive. They must be mad! Mr. Paget, our junior, thinks so too. We have not a stick or a leg to go upon."

"That was what Mr. Paget said in our office—his very words," added Mr. Dawkins.

"Of course we'll settle!" asked Mr. Cater, a little nervously.

"Oh, of course," said Mr. Tilney. "A thousand a year! My goodness! A thousand! It is noble! Of course he will."

"Of course I will!" said Mr. Ross, ironically. "Oh, you seem to settle the thing readily enough among you. Then of course I won't. My mind's made up, and, whether I live or die, whether I am assaulted by ruffians in the street or no, I'll fight the thing out to the last. You, attorneys! Why, you don't know your own trade! Why would they be so eager to compromise? Don't you see the confession of weakness? I shall go on! I'll fight them till I drop, or go to a jail! I'll have every shilling, or not a shilling!"

"What madness!" said Mr. Cater, starting up. "Then you'll go on by yourself, sir, and you'll settle with me, sir, at once, and get another solicitor. I'll risk no more for such a madman. Confession of weakness! Why, Mr. Paget told us the reason. Why, you know, the defendant is a young orphan girl, who wants no law. But take your own course, sir."

At this moment, with the young man standing up, his eyes hot, his cheeks glowing, and the ugly scar looking as if it were about to burst open from the force of the angry blood within—with the two solicitors scowling legally at him with set lips—with Mrs. Tilney and her family rustling their dresses from "flouncing" indignantly in their chairs, the door opened softly, and what seemed to Mr. Tillotson a vision, a divine spirit of peace and soft tranquillity, seemed to glide in to compose these angry elements. She stood a moment with her hand on the door, brought with her silence and stillness, and a converging of all the angry faces on her.

CHAPTER V. ADA MILLWOOD.

SHE stood there a moment. Wonderful wavy hair, of nearly the shade of gold, which ran and rippled in countless tiny hills and valleys, and gave a rich look of detail and garnish; below, a soft transparent skin, with the dreamiest eyes, a small mouth with pale lips, and an almost heart-shaped face. At this was Mr. Tillotson looking over from his chair with a strange attraction. There was nothing marked, but every feature was kept in privacy and retirement, and over all floated a sort of tranquil light—a golden halo, as it were, that might have come from the very reflexion of that yellow hair.

The solicitors half rose in obedience to the spell. Though the dresses of the mamma and the two sisters ran a sort of rustle of impatience, which, to say the truth, was almost instinctive, she glided over to Ross, and laying her hand on his arm, said, in a low whisper which every one heard:

"Do, do be advised, dear William. Listen to your friends, and to those who know your interests best. Do, oh do!" And she looked up into his face with a calm devotional entreaty.

He set himself free impatiently. "So *you* come with the rest! One of the wise women that know law, I suppose, and know the world as well as any of these professionals. Go away. Go up to your sewing again."

"Before it is too late," she went on. "Think of it, William. Ah!" she added, in the same half whisper, "what is this? You are hurt."

(The lawyers, set free now from the spell of that sudden entry, had begun to talk again. So what she said was unheard, except by Mr. Tillotson.)

"How did you get this?" he heard her say, a little impatiently. "Ah! You have been in some quarrel. I know it, indeed. This old unhappy taste. Will you *never* have done with it?"

"No questioning, please," he answered. "As you must know, suppose it was a razor—a blunt infernal thing? And I tell you what;" his eyes began to flame and shoot sparks over to Mr. Tillotson, and his breathing to grow hard; "I'll have a satisfaction in finding out the fellow that did it! It'll be the worst job for him in his trade this many a day."

Her eyes quickly followed the savage direction of his. A sort of light seemed to fill her face as she saw Mr. Tillotson. Mr. Tilney, who had been hovering about uneasily, seized the opening eagerly, to divert his guest from their domestic concerns.

"Mr. Tillotson, my *dear*—gentleman from town, stopping at the White Hart. Most unfortunate, this. The Dook used to talk about washing our fine linen in private, and upon my soul I believe it is always the best course."

"I am sorry to have come in at such a moment," said Mr. Tillotson to *her*; "and, indeed, I wished to go away long since. Perhaps I had better go even now."

She answered him with a kindly eagerness.

"No, no," she said; "stay. It is a curious welcome for you, after all. You will know our little troubles soon enough. Even now;" her placid eyes looked round with a little caution, and then dropped on the ground as she spoke, but Ross was again speaking low to the lawyers; "even now, you, who have been here but one hour, have learned some of our wretched ways—ways that no teaching, no experience, will mend."

Mr. Tillotson's pale face began to colour. "How?" he said.

"Ah! you understand, I see. A razor indeed! I can admire your restraint and calmness, but such lessons are only thrown away on some!"

She said this with a melancholy that made her, to his eyes, more like a saint than any of the famous pictures and images by divine and devout men, that he had seen as he travelled. In that private interview—for it was private, with the storm of voices raging about them—there seemed to have been much spoken, though not in words; the golden threads of sympathy had been joined between them.

"Do you stay here long?" she went on, hastily, and turning to look out of the window. "Then they must show you the cathedral. Look at it, opposite. Oh, if you do, make me a promise! I am ashamed to speak so, after only a few seconds of acquaintance, but you will forgive and excuse me. I know what all this means—what has taken place between you and him. Do not mind him. He has been brought up strangely. We all give way to him. We all humour him. He is worried and harassed and troubled. Will you promise me?"

Her face fell into such a sweet, soft, imploring expression of devotion, that no one could have resisted. But Mr. Tillotson only answered: "I quarrel! Indeed, no! Ah, you do not know. Certainly, I promise. Did you know what my life has been, you would indeed say that you might trust me."

Again the solicitor came back to his point, but on a soft and persuasive "tack." "Surely, Mr. Ross, a sensible long-headed man of the world like you, will listen to reason. What can you have to go upon? Surely, we ought to know your interests; they are ours, are they not? We are in the same boat, are we not?"

"Same boat! Speak for yourself, sir, and row for yourself! I know what I am at," said Ross. "I can see through a stone wall, where another man couldn't find room to put a stone. I've made my plans."

"He is thinking of that ridiculous wild-goose chase on which that Grainger set off," said Mrs. Tilney, flouncing and tossing. "Hunting up a witness! It is mere childish folly—a ridiculous will-o'-the-wisp."

"And *you* know much about it?" said Ross; "stick to your ribbons and laces, ma'am. You're a fine hand at advice. As for Grainger, he has a longer head than all your six-and-eightpennies put together."

"Sir! Mr. Ross!" said the solicitor, starting. "Yes," said Ross, "I *am* waiting for him. He'll be here, and, witness or no witness, I'll stand by him, and by what he says. He's in the town at this moment, or *should* be. My goodness, what's that? I declare if it isn't—"
and he ran out of the room.

The attorney, still fuming, got up and went to the window. There was a cab with luggage at the gate. In a moment Ross had come back, had thrown the door open, and had entered. "There, there!" he said, triumphantly. "Look at him! This is the man of his word. He was to be here to-morrow, and he is here before his time, and—successful."

"Successful!" cried the two attorneys together, and with a start.

CHAPTER VI. AMONG THE TILNEYS.

THE gentleman who entered with him took off a sort of poncho very leisurely. Then they saw a tall but stooping man, with a long bony face, which seemed inflamed round the cheek-bones, either with the sun or with drinking. He had a lanky ragged moustache hanging down over his lips, and bright though "watery" eyes. "A regular council!" he said. "Easier work, I can tell you, than what I have been at."

"Now, Grainger," said Ross, eagerly, "speak out, and don't be afraid of any one here." (The other smiled and looked on them a little contemptuously.) "Speak out. Every one of these wise heads have been at me, including the demure gentlemen just come down from London. They have been screaming and chattering, 'Settle, settle,' until you would think you were in a cage of parrots. Now what do you say? You have as much right to be heard as any of them."

"I think so," answered his friend, coldly. "Well, I say *don't*—not if your mother was to tell you on her dying bed. Do nothing of the kind. Don't mind 'em, these legal friends of yours, whom I see in such force here. They have their reasons, of course. But don't mind them."

"Then you will take your own course, Mr. Ross, your own course," said the professional voices. The owners of the professional voices were standing up to go.

"I certainly shall," said Mr. Ross, "and I mean to do so. And you shall take the course I take, Messrs. Cater and Dawkins, unless I am very much mistaken. I should like to see you when I stand up in court, and tell the judge that my solicitors have thrown up my case on the eve of the assizes, simply because I wouldn't compromise it! And also when I hand up to his lordship a note, showing the speculative character of your professional assistance. No, no, Messrs. Cater and Dawkins. You will think it over, and you will act as your client instructs you. And now once for all, don't worry me any more. And know all of you by these presents, to use your own jargon, I shall go on and on, and on again, and fight the thing to the death.

So long as I have a breath in me, I will. It gives me life and enjoyment. I like playing double or quits. It's my fancy. I've taken this thing up, and worked it myself so far, and, if you please, shall work it my own way. So now please tell Mr. Bacon that your client declines all compromise. There. I have an appointment at the barracks now."

He strode out of the room. After a moment's pause: "*That's* sensible," said Mr. Cater. "That's what we may call genteel. There's a nice specimen of the relation that should exist between solicitor and client. But let him go on. Let him take his own course. I wash my hands of the whole thing—that is, of all responsibility," he added, thus showing that Mr. Ross had stated the indissoluble nature of this relation, and the view the judge would take of it, quite correctly. "Then there is no further reason for our staying. Good night, good night. It is very melancholy to see such an exhibition. Even the lesson he seems to have got to-night—for it is plain he has been in some street row—no matter. Good night to you, ladies. We shall just catch the train." And the two gentlemen went away.

"A thousand per annum," said Mr. Tilney, coming back; "only think of *that*. It seems like a dream, a sane man refusing it. It seems quite a dream."

Thus the professional men went away, and the family, as if relieved from a burden, and now disengaged from the practical, turned to Mr. Tillotson. Every face took down its shutters, and put its best goods in the window, and Mrs. Tilney promptly repaired the horrible omission of social forms.

Mr. Tilney felt that a fresh introduction was necessary.

"I met this gentleman, whom I—I know—and just brought him up. Maria, my dear, Mr. Tillotson. These are my girls, Mr. Tillotson—Augusta and Julia."

On Mr. Tilney's mouth the rays of a mysterious intelligence beamed out with unusual effulgence. The "girls" met him with joyous alacrity. For Mr. Tilney's proceedings were so perfectly understood in his own family, that it was well known that every article he introduced was guaranteed. They read in the creases of his forehead, in his large grey eyes—even the Roman nose seemed to give warning—that this was a valuable stranger.

"Sit down near me, Mr. Tillotson," said Mrs. Tilney, "and tell me about yourself, now that we are rid of that dreadful man. So you are come to stay here." (This she had read off, on her husband's forehead.)

Mr. Tillotson, scarcely recovered from his embarrassment, answered: "Only for a few days. I should like to stay longer. It seems such an inviting place—"

"Only a few days?" said Mrs. Tilney, uneasily. "Why I thought—" and she was almost going to add, "Mr. Tilney had conveyed to us that you were a desirable object to invest capital in,"

but she checked herself, and said, "that is really a very short stay."

The girls, however, had perfect confidence in their parent's manner. His own friends might be, for all social purposes, of a worthless sort, but he never ventured to be the "bringer" of useless recruits. One of the girls promptly "fell out," and laid her charms at the feet of Mr. Tillotson.

"You came from town, Mr. Tillotson?" she said, almost sadly. "Oh, how charming! Papa and mamma used to live in town, and have promised to take me there next year, if I am good. We are here for our education. They are considered to have the best masters in St. Alans. You will wait for Sunday, I am sure. Oh, you must—to hear the anthem. Dr. Fugle sings the tenor divinely. You must stay, and come to our pew."

Mr. Tillotson said it all depended: if he *could* stay, he should be glad. Miss Augusta—that was her name—was delighted.

"Mamma! mamma!"

"What is it, dear?"

"Mr. Tillotson has promised to stay for Sunday, to hear Doctor Fugle."

"I am very glad, dear. You must know, Mr. Tillotson, we all take our stand on the cathedral. It is our little boast. They say there is no one at Westminster Abbey comes near to Dr. Fugle."

It was an antique little room, with the corners cut off by cupboards. Indeed, the house was very old, and rather "remarkable," to use Mr. Tilney's expression. The windows were of the true rustic pattern, and, only twenty years ago, had diamond panes. In one window was the third girl, now standing with her hand to her face, looking out, in an attitude of surprising and unconscious grace. As the light fell upon her, and lighted up her devotional and pensive features, it almost seemed to the visitor that she did not belong to the mundane and earthy company sitting there, but that she was somehow associated with the cathedral opposite, and that from thence a soft and gorgeous saint from the florid window, or some gentle angel from a niche, had come to them, and would presently return. He almost passed into a dream as he looked, and did not hear the rapid chatter that was in his ears. Suddenly she moved, and went hurriedly out of the room, and in a moment he saw Ross pass the window. A kind of coldness and blankness came back on him, and in a few moments he rose to go.

Mr. Tilney wrung his hand with his most affectionate brown-sherry manner, and came out with him to the garden.

"Gay girls; light-hearted things. They'll go on there for I don't know how much longer. I shall start off to bed, Tillotson. Time was when I would be sitting down to the green cloth, and beginning to deal. That was in the Dook's day. I must show you his letter. One of the kindest and most delicate things, now, you could con-

ceive, and, for a man in his station—an H.R.H., you know—wonderful! Just look at the cathedral there. No poetry in me, you know, and I don't set up for it. But I can see. Just look at it now. Does it or does it not speak to you here?" he added, touching his waistcoat. "I always think of the fine line, 'Lifts its tall head and—something or other. Come up to-morrow, and let us see you before you go. You like the girls? Ah, yes. They are so fond of fun; that is their only fault. But how can they help it? Look here, Tillotson," he added, stopping solemnly, "if my grave was waiting for me, ready open, over *there*, I wouldn't say a word to check their little harmless fun. No, I *couldn't* do it. I don't see now why I couldn't go part of the way with you," Mr. Tilney said, musingly, as if some one had started an objection to such a thing. "Why not? I declare I will!" and Mr. Tilney took Mr. Tillotson's arm, and walked on.

With some hesitation, Mr. Tillotson asked: "Mr. Ross, is he any relation?"

"Oh, Ross—poor Ross—to be sure! A good well-meaning creature. Never do in the world. A kind of a cousin of the girls. We have tried everything to push him on, but can't. A most self-willed foolish young man, sir. He has got into this lawsuit, which will make him, he says, or break him. Absurd, absurd, sir. Every one of the girls despise him for it."

"But I think," said Mr. Tillotson, doubtfully, "Miss Ada Millwood is interested in him."

Mr. Tilney shook his head. "A good girl. Blankets, and all that sort of thing. Playfellows from that high, you know, and pity, and that kind of thing. No, no, no. I suppose if the man has his full pay to spend, he is well off."

Mr. Tilney said this as if, under such circumstances, the idea of any relation of affection was absurd.

"Yes, he is a strange creature, a very improper kind of man. He sometimes frightens me, do you know, Tillotson—breaks out in a manner that's quite alarming. I do believe that man—he's only seven-and-twenty his next birthday—is one mass of bad passions. No influences will do," added Mr. Tilney, sadly. "No, no. He has nothing *here* to call on—no chimes of his youth. And once you lose *that*, it's all up! The man, Tillotson, has *no* sense of religion. Nothing that you can put your hand on to touch;" here Mr. Tilney made a motion of winding up a musical-box.

"Who is he, then?" asked Mr. Tillotson, a little interested. "Where does he come from?"

"His father was an opulent" (he pronounced this word again in a rich and unctuous way), "an op-u-lent Indian merchant. He sent this lad home to one of our great public schools, where he might learn that manliness and self-confidence which I say is so specially English. We all owe that to our great public schools.

Look at Byron, look at Peel, look at little Singleton, who, when I knew him first, I vow to Heaven, used to go to a cheap tailor in the Minories, and whom it was a bit of charity to give a chop and a potato to. Well, sir, that man is now governor to one of the royal princes, and that man was at a public school."

"And then?" said Mr. Tillotson.

"It was very bad, very, very ungentlemanly. He one day threw a ruler at his master, nearly killed him; an ordained clergyman. Very gross—"by man's hand, you know, let it be shed." He was expelled two hours afterwards. And his father, a kind of cousin of mine, afterwards broke hopelessly."

"I beg your pardon," said Mr. Tillotson.

"Broke, I say—horse, foot, and dragons. I don't think there was one-and-sixpence in the pound left. Died the next year. And, I must say in justice to him, has made his own way ever since. Got himself a commission, God knows how, and goes on in that way, you know. A very strange being. Quite savage at times. I sometimes think there is something wrong in his head."

Then Mr. Tillotson bade him good-bye, and walked away slowly, really admiring the stillness of the little common, and the picturesque houses behind him, which seemed taken from an old German or French town, and the great massive cathedral which rose so yellow before him.

That idea of yellowness suggested to him another idea of yellow, and, thinking of that pensive tragical girl who was in that "rackety" house, but not of it, and stood out on such a strange background, and such unsuitable figures as companions, he walked slowly towards the White Hart, lost his way pleasantly, found it again, got into the streets where the gaudy grocers had nearly shut up their theatrical stores—found Mr. Hiscock at his bar—was treated as a state guest, who ordered costly brown sherry.

One odd reflection might have occurred to him that night as he laid his head down under his baldequino, that he had been led, chafing and with reluctance, to Mr. Tilney's house, with a weary impression on his mind that "this man would fasten on him," whereas he had come away with a feeling that amounted to eager interest, when Mr. Tilney said, cheerily, "See you to-morrow, early. Call for you, eh?"

PARADISE REVISITED.

Of all the innocent tastes of my childhood, two only may, I think, be said to have fairly weathered the storms and buffets of life; to have defied the disenchanting influence of time; and to flourish yet, serene and unimpaired, above the ruins of many a far more potent passion. These are, pastry and pantomime.

I like a tart. Why shouldn't I like a tart? Because I am a man, shall I deny the acquaintance of a Bath-bun? Must the cheese-cake

lose its flavour in passing between lips on which time and nature have conferred a beard? Nonsense. I am accustomed to speak out. I like all manner of the sweetest things known to the craft of confectioner—nor would I covet a more delightful ten minutes than may be passed in renewing many a pleasing intimacy of this description. Is there, I would calmly inquire, anything brutal or unmanly in eating ladies' fingers? Can there be more delicate enjoyment than in a meringue?

My deliberate opinion, founded upon close, occasionally furtive observation, is, that an attachment to sweet things is far more deeply rooted in the manly British breast than is generally supposed. It is my proud remembrance never to have given in to the false shame which suggests concealment of this innocent partiality. I am no more ashamed of the sweetness of my tooth than of its whiteness. At Didcot, I may have been seen to dash down the window, and call out, "Banbury-cake!" in tones asserting themselves above the thunder of the train, and almost before it stopped. I may often have been seen engaged with this—when fresh—exquisite dainty—not, as I have noticed the pusillanimous do, behind the Times—but, frankly and crumbly, before mankind!

While writing, an idea has occurred to me. Now that wine-drinking is rapidly on the decline, why should pastry-eating—I mean in a convivial sense—not take its room? The effect at public dinners would be no less imposing.

"Gentlemen, pray charge your platters. Trifle." ("Bumpers" might still be added.)

In more private circles, the familiar wish, "May we ne'er want a friend, nor a bottle to give him!" would lose nothing in heartiness by the substitution of "tartlet" for "bottle." Since pitchers have fallen somewhat into desuetude as vehicles for port wine, "My Friend and Fritter," would be a positive improvement upon the popular version. Again, a very trivial change in another favourite toast, would supply us with the sentiment (accompanied, say, with a round of Charlottes-Russes), "May the present moment not be the sweetest of our lives!"

Surely, surely, patriotism and loyalty, hitherto too much associated with champagne, may be evolved as readily from a macaroon. Cannot friendship—acknowledged to sparkle with such peculiar brightness in the bowl—glow as richly in the bosom of a Christmas pudding?

Finally, be it remembered that that exquisitely pleasurable sensation, supposed (in song) to be derivable from not retiring to one's usual residence until past daybreak, need not, of necessity, be foregone. Appetite will probably determine that point. And there is this decided advantage in my scheme, that, whereas people were accustomed to continue their potations long after they had ceased to care much about it, that can never be the case with reference to the lighter lollipops which shall conclude my banquet.

Although, as I have said, devoid of that

craven feeling which prompts the repudiation of such sweet friends of one's boyhood as apple-puff and mince-pie, I will own to a certain degree of embarrassment in effecting the purchase of smaller and slighter matters. Toffee I can demand, in clear unhesitating tones; as, by a liberal order, it may be made to look as if intended for a neighbouring nursery. Butter-Scotch, for the same reason, offers no difficulty. But I will admit that, did occasion present itself, I would prefer purchasing my barley-sugar through the intervention of an agent.

Of the latter compound, there is a kind whose paly gold exercises over me a remarkable fascination. It may be that it recalls certain ringlets, of similar form and hue, that—Well, no matter; but she and I have eaten marmalade from one gallipot—and these are not things to be forgotten.

No later than yesterday, I stood gazing irresolutely (under pretence of examining a new coffee-mill) at a cluster of these amber delicacies, enshrined in the usual vase of crystal. Suddenly, a bright thought struck me. Assuming a slight cough, I stepped in.

"Have you—have—anything that's—that's good for—dear me!—eh—dear me!—a bad cold?—something to—" I pointed to my throat, groaning.

The shopman handed me a small box; hard, brown, and sour.

"Black-currant drops, sir? Much recommended."

I knew them, and declined.

"Dr. Pilberrow's Nurses' Joy, sir. Sugar-lozenges, tintoured with magnesia—"

"No, no. I wish for something—anything you have, of a softer, more lubricating—see! Such, for instance, as that yellowish substance, in the long glass."

"Barley-sugar, sir? Yes, sir. How much would you please to have, sir?"

I may be mistaken, but I fancied that the phantom of a smile stole over that young man's visage as he weighed me out a pound, throwing in a little bit over.

Equally fervent, equally unswerving, has been my attachment to that phase of dramatic art known as Pantomime. From the Cave of Doldrums, to the clown's final summer-set, I am a captive to the illusive scene; bound up with its details; laying up stores of wisdom and prudence from its suggestive changes.

Why do I speak of illusion? Intercourse, for a certain number of years, with the world, has placed me in a condition to aver that Pantomime is truth—truth coloured, condensed, elaborated—but truth itself. Gorgeous temples, demanding reverence—with men behind, in corduroys and dirty shirt-sleeves, pushing them on; gently heaving seas, the waves (invisible) punching each other's ribs, in a cloud of slate-coloured dust; baronial castles, whose noble occupants must have been content to dwell, like chrysalids, in the interstices of the single

wall. Clowns, boisterous, mischievous, unscrupulous; harlequins, gay, plausible, vindictive, mysterious; columbines, fair and fickle; pantaloons, with every attribute of age, except its reverence; even to the lovely Queen of Fays, who, after taking graceful leave at the close of the introduction, reappears at the general finish, standing on one leg above a revolving wheel, surrounded by a green glare, changing into red, and thence into an unpleasant smell. All these things, only in a far less honest form, have I encountered beyond the wall of a theatre; and if it soothe me to sit and witness their reproduction, under circumstances which can no longer betray, who shall censure? I don't care *who*. To-day—just for to-day—I am a boy again, and my two boyish fancies shall have their ample range. I will lunch at a pastrycook's, and I will subsequently attend a pantomime. Yet, hold! Boys are gregarious. Is it to renew the wholesomer part of youth, to feast and gaze without a friend! Where shall I seek another lad? It occurs to me, in a manner so abrupt and singular, as to be almost worthy of psychological analysis—had I an hour to spare—that my excellent neighbours, Mr. and Mrs. Tibblethwayte, are spending the Christmas from home, unavoidably leaving three at least of their little flock behind them. What if I obtain them for the day and evening?

I looked at my watch. It could not yet be their dinner-time. Their young appetites must be in the very highest pastry condition. I was at the house in three minutes, requesting, with respectful compliments, audience of Miss Cavalier, the preceptress—a lady of infinite stiffness and inexorable will.

Reassured by the tidings that Miss Cavalier was absent for the day, I made my way to the school-room, and, stilling the noisy greetings, announced to Nurse Edmonds that I required the loan of her charges.

There was a pause of trembling expectation, for nurse looked graver than could be desired.

"Missis had hexpressed her wishes as the poor little things might have a little hentertainment; but, of which kind?"

"It isn't a norriery?" said Master Bobby, with a look of dark suspicion.

I shook my head.

"Nor it isn't a fillysofical class-lecture?" ejaculated Miss Mattie—a tear in ambush under her eyelid, ready, in the event of an affirmative, to dim the pretty blue.

I laughed contemptuously.

"Bosh!" said Master Augustus. "Mr. Goodbody wouldn't take us to such rubbish as *that* comes to! But it isn't 'Instructive Riddles'—eh?" the young gentleman added, with a slight diminution of confidence.

"Nor a threepenny reading?" said Mattie.

At the last suggestion there was a subdued but general groan.

"You don't like readings?" I asked, in feigned astonishment.

"Not when it's such awful (word expres-

sive of decomposing matter) as the last," said Master Augustus, firmly.

"Why, what was it?"

"'Paradise Rewisited,' sir," explained nurse. "'By a Loacle Poet.' Ma'amselle hev took them to all the four; but they come back quite cross and sleepy, and seemed as if they couldn't tell which they was at, last."

"No wonder! Hark ye, children! I am intending, this day, to revisit Paradise, or what, at your age, somewhat resembled it to me. I have promised myself a Christmas Pantomime!" (A cry of joy.) "Pausing on the way, at a spot where, I am given to understand, light refreshments, adapted to juvenile tastes, may be procured, and enjoyed without fear of after consequences. Will you come with me?"

Nurse hesitated to answer the appealing looks.

"If—if ma'amselle should know it——"

"Ma'amselle *shall* know it, to-morrow. Meantime, I take upon myself the responsibility."

And, engaging to restore the other three children by a reasonable hour, I the fourth child carried them off in triumph.

Merry as grasshoppers, we made our way along the most disturbed thoroughfares we could find: Mattie and I leading: the boys close at our heels. I noticed with secret satisfaction that, in passing any pastrycook's—and we passed not a few—our rear-guard sensibly relaxed their pace, and even Mattie's little fingers gave an involuntary pressure. At length, as we neared a perfect wilderness of sweets, the prospect became too maddening, and Master Augustus, dashing to the front, proposed a halt.

I affected to demur, but Mattie's appealing look, and the fragrance wafted forth as we lingered in consultation on the threshold, resolved the question. We entered. Here, as a veteran, I deemed some words of caution not misplaced. I besought my ardent levies not to tilt blindly at Bath-buns, the major tarts, or great satisfying things of *any* kind, but to survey the ground, and then, tranquilly, advisedly, commence the attack.

The foray lasted so long, that, in common prudence, I was obliged to sound the recall. The damage inflicted on the enemy, especially in the arm of open tarts, was very considerable. I decline to mention my own achievements (Generals rarely do), and shall only state that, when my three charges had made their computations, there remained unaccounted for as follows:—One triangular tart, a Shrewsbury cake, three apricot puffs, one cheese-cake, and a maid-of-honour, together with some minor matters, and (I think) a glass of cherry-brandy. For all of which, notwithstanding the mystery that hung over their disappearance, I cheerfully paid.

Fortune had decreed that there was to be no pause in our delight. A bill suspended in the shop had forewarned us that there was to be at one of the larger theatres a morning performance of the Grand Christmas Pantomime, com-

mencing at two o'clock. Just time. We should not want any dinner? Eh?

Master Augustus having requested, in the name of the party, that the meal in question might not be mentioned in their hearing for a week, we set forth.

Capital places! A brilliant house! Beautiful red glare—so different from the mere sunshine we had quitted! A crowd of happy children, from six years old to seventy, settling themselves in their places for three hours' ceaseless enjoyment. For our parts, we gave ourselves up wholly to the scene: Mattie alone looking a little grave, and casting so many nervous glances in a certain direction, that I was induced to inquire the reason.

It seemed that the figure of a lady in a neighbouring box, whose back was towards us, had forcibly recalled that of Miss Cavalier.

Could it be herself?

Oh no, no. Mattie considered that was impossible! Miss Cavalier (I gathered from my little friend's remarks) was rather Miss Puritan in the matter of theatres, neither attending them herself, nor willingly permitting anybody else to do so. Furthermore, she regarded the half million of her fellow-Christians who, directly or indirectly, made their bread by these unhallowed institutions (not to mention the several millions, from her sovereign downward, who derived solace and amusement from them), as in the most imminent spiritual peril: evincing altogether views of the most elevated kind, and charity of that comprehensive nature which is usually found to characterise such an intelligence.

The rising of the curtain at this juncture banished all remembrance of the accidental resemblance, and the possible scolding on the morrow, it had brought into Mattie's mind.

I am not going into minute detail. Enough that what succeeded surpassed our most sanguine anticipations, and even the foreshadowings of the bill itself, which was not framed with diffidence. Let me simply record that the opening scene was even more gloomy and depressing than usual. It was the abode of an individual of doubtful sex, Mr. (or Mrs.) Antiquity, who, in addition to keeping an old curiosity shop, dabbled slightly in dramatic literature: his (or her) present distress arising from the tightness of the fairy market, with reference to subjects for a pantomime. Need it be related that, in the moment of supreme despondency, a square black pitfall opened, and, after a slight delay, suggestive of the coming fairy stopping to tie her shoe, that aerial being stepped upon the stage, and presented Antiquity with all that was needed, in the form of a new and enlarged edition of Jack the Giant Killer. The mere mention of that familiar name elicited from us a burst of involuntary applause, and when the scene changed to the humble but cheerful dwelling of—how shall I describe him? Jack the elder—we resettled ourselves, as in preparation for events of thrilling interest.

Pantomime corrects history, and, whereas we had always been instructed that Jack's first victim was eighteen feet high, and resided in a cavern commodiously situated on the top of St. Michael's Mount, we now found that he began with a little stunted victim of ten feet and a half, who had no ostensible residence at all. That Jack's departure on this errand was celebrated by a ball, in which sixty young ladies, in light and brief habiliments, formed some very pretty tableaux—caused us no more surprise than it did the elder John, who sat and smoked the while; for, but little is known of Cornish domestic life in the days of King Arthur, and this pleasing demonstration might have filled the place of what would now have been a public dinner.

Such a hop-o'-my-thumb as we have described gave the intrepid Jack, as might be expected, very little trouble. His head (he had but one), was quickly on the road to Lyonesse—as, now-a-days, one places a remarkable sturgeon at the foot of royalty. But the next giant was a totally different affair. His heads were three in number. His stature was variously estimated from eighteen to twenty-four feet. His temper was irascible, his appetite without limit. That this terrible monster was on the move, was rendered manifest by the numerous rustics who, with countenances pale and elongated, passed with long strides across the stage, or huddled in terrified groups at the wing. It subsequently became known that Gorgibuster's appetite was, this morning, singularly keen: he having breakfasted early, and slenderly, on a single ox. Furthermore, he was known especially to desire human flesh, having but recently devoured two-thirds of a school who had been permitted, by an indiscreet usher, to bathe near his dwelling. Some of the parents having remonstrated, Jack had been appealed to, and hence his present enterprise.

It has been a point of much dispute among modern writers, whether giants roared. This one did. A low rumbling sound, increasing in volume at every utterance, announced the monster's approach. Music of a colossal nature accompanied the sound of mighty steps, which—had there been such an instrument near—we might have attribute to the big drum—and Gorgibuster floundered on the scene.

As he was the largest, so was he the most complete and workable giant I had ever seen. His legs displayed as much tractability as if their lower fathom or so had been cast in the mould of nature, not of art. His heads were on the best possible terms, and, but for the peculiarity of the eyes being situated in the chin, and the nose on the forehead, might have been called human. Moreover, those eyes (being practicable) admitted of being winked; and the very first wink the giant gave was the signal for a demonstration we had not expected. The giant was accosted by stentorian voices as "George!" was offered the compliments of the season, was congratulated on his growth and generally robust appearance, and was otherwise

greeted so much in the style of an old acquaintance, that I referred to the bill for information, and thereby discovered that the vital principle of the giant was composed of Mr. George R. Bungaye, renowned for feats of strength and comic minstrelsy.

The giant did not always roar. He spoke in colloquial tones, and threw some light upon another mysterious question, by frankly admitting that, with regard to "*see-saw-fum*," neither he (Gorgibuster) nor any of his brethren, had the remotest idea what was intended to be conveyed by those remarkable expressions.

I have dwelt long upon this giant—for the truth is, we liked him—we took to him. He was not the furious ill-bred monster we had been taught to expect. Rumour had belied him. Gay, frank, genial, he showed himself possessed of the most attractive social attributes. He sang, he jested, he actually—though at the cost, we feared, of much pain and weariness—shuffled through the sailors' hornpipe: using his vicarious legs with as much spirit as though wicker-work were instinct with life. His very club—formed of timber which possessed the rare and curious property of collapsing, when brought into contact with any hard substance—partook of its master's yielding and peaceable disposition. And as for his appetite—when it is remembered that he had three mouths to feed, and some twenty feet of stowage-room demanding freight, I affirm that it was by no means inordinate.

With regret we witnessed the fate of this so young and happy giant! In the bright heyday of life—in the flower of appetite, always peckish, yet never voracious—he was cut off by that unfair weapon, Jack's sword of sharpness; retiring into his own stomach, so as to admit of decapitation, his three heads were cut off; and, with faces wholly unchanged, beaming and winking as in life, were transmitted to the king. An adjuration to the prostrate trunk from the gallery, to rise and give them "Hot collings," was treated with the contempt it deserved, and in a few minutes we were in the full swing and riot of the harlequinade.

Glorious was the fun.. We were fortunate in our clown. More accomplished fooling was never seen, since the sun of Folly went down, in Grimaldi. All four of us, exhausted with laughter, were taking advantage of a moment's pause in the hurry of events, to lean back and wipe our brows, when Mattie uttered an exclamation. Following the direction of her eyes, my own fell, astonished, upon the lady to whom our attention had already been directed. She had turned round, and was leaning forward, flushed with excitement, and devouring the scene with the interest of a child of ten. Miss Cavalier!

Our parties subsequently met in the passage, Miss Cavalier walking between an old gentleman with a pleasant face and reverend grey head, and a fair lady, who seemed to be his daughter. As I boldly presented my charges, Miss Cavalier blushed and smiled.

"Kind friends—over-persuaded—couldn't leave—pleasant spectacle—such happy faces." Some such murmurs reached my ear, as I put my little companions into the carriage, and their preceptress, following, waved me a sweet adieu.

There was no scolding on the morrow.

MISERY.

I.

'Twas neither day nor night, but both together,
Mix'd in a muddy smudge of London weather,
And the dull pouring of perpetual
Dim rain was vague, and vast, and over all.

She stray'd on through the rain, and through the mud,

That did the slop-fed filmy city flood,
Meekly unmindful as are wretches who,
Accustom'd to discomfortings, pursue
Their paths scarce conscious of the more or less
Of misery mingled with each day's distress.
Albeit the ghostly rag, too thin to call
Even the bodily remnant of a shawl
(Mere heaps of holes to one another stitch'd),
That tightly was about her shoulders twitch'd;
As at each step the fretful cough, in vain
By its vex'd victim check'd, brake loose again
And shiver'd through it, dripping drop by drop,
Contrived the flaccid petticoat to sop
With the chill surcharge of its oozy welt.

The mud was everywhere. It seem'd to melt
Out of the grimy houses, trickling down
Those brickwork blocks that at each other frown,
Unsociable, though squeez'd and jam'm'd so close
Together; all monotonously morose,
And claiming each, behind his iron rail,
The smug importance of a private jail.
It seem'd to stuff the blurr'd and spongy sky,
To clog the slimy streets, and fiercely try
To climb the door-steps, blind with spatter'd filth
The dismal lamps, and spew out its sick spilth
At unawares, from hiding-places, known
In dark street-corners to its spite alone.
She stray'd on through the mud: 'twas nothing new!

And through the rain—the rain? it was mud too!
The woman still was young, and Nature meant,
Doubtless, she should be fair; but that intent
Hunger, in haste, had marr'd, or toil, or both.
There was no colour in the quiet mouth,
Nor fulness; yet it had a ghostly grace
Pathetically pale. The thin young face
Was interpenetrated tenderly
With soft significance. The warm brown eye
And warm brown hair had gentle gleams. Perchance

Those gracious tricks of gesture and of glance,
Those dear and innocent arts—a woman's ways
Of wearing pretty looks, and winning praise,
The pleasantness of pleasing, and the skill,
Were native to this woman—woman still,
Though woman wither'd. There's a last degree
Of misery that is sexless wholly. She
Was yet what ye are—mothers, sisters, wives,
That are so sweet and lovely in our lives;—
A woman still, for all her wither'd look,
Even as a faded flower shut in a book
Is still a flower.

II.

Dark darker grows. The lamps
Of London, flaring through the foggy damps,
Glare up and down the grey streets ghostily,
And the long roaring of loud wheels rolls by,
The huge hump-shoulder'd bridge is reach'd. She stops.

The shadowy stream beneath it slides, and drops
With sulky sound between the arches old.
She eyed it from the parapet. The cold
Clung to her, creeping up the creepy stream.
The enormous city, like a madman's dream,
Full of strange hummings and unnatural glare,
Beat on her brain. Some Tempter whisper'd,

"There

Is quiet, and an end of long distress.
Leap down! leap in! One anguish more or less
In this tense tangle of tormented souls
God keeps no strict account of. The stream rolls
For ever and for ever. Death is swift,
And easy."

Then soft shadows seem'd to lift
Long arms out of the streaming dark below,
Woefully waving to her.

But, ah, no,
Ah, no! she is still afraid of them to-night,
Those plausible familiars. Die? what right
Is hers to die?—a mother and a wife,
Whose love hath given hostages to life!

The voices of the shadows make reply,

"Woman, No right to live is Right to die.
What right to live—which means, What right to eat
(What 'hou hast ceased to earn) the bread and meat
That's not enough for all—what unearn'd right
Hast thou to say, 'I choose to live'?"

With might
The mocking shadows mounted as they spoke,
Nearer and clearer; and their voices broke
Into a groan that mingled with the roar
Of London, growing louder evermore
With multitudes of meanings from below,
Mysterious, wrathful, miserable.

"Ah, no,
Ah, no! For Willie waits for me at home,
And will not sleep all night till I am come.
'Tis late . . . but there were hopes of work to do:
I waited, though in vain. Ah, if he knew! . . .
And how to meet to-morrow?" . . .

A drunken man
Stumbled against her, stared, and then began
To troll a tavern stave, with husky voice
(The subject coarse, the language strong, not choice),
And, humming, reel'd away.

Upstream'd again
The voices of the shadows, in disdain:

"A mother? and a wife? Ill-gotten names
Filch'd from earth's blisses to increase its shames!
What right have breadless mothers to give birth
To breadless babies? Children meant for mirth,
And motherhood for rapture, and the bliss
Of wifehood crowning womanhood, the kiss
Of lips, whose kissing melts two lives in one:—
What right was thine, forsooth, because the sun
Is sweet in June, and blood beats high in youth,
To claim those blessings? claim'd, what right, forsooth,

To change them into curses, craving love,
Who lackest bread? There is no room above
Earth's breast for amorous paupers. Creep below,
And hide thyself from failure!"

"Is it so?"

She murmur'd, "even so! and yet . . . dear heart,
I meant to comfort thee!" Then with a start,
"And he is sick, poor man! No work to-day . . .
No work to-morrow . . . And the rent to pay . . .
And two small mouths to feed." . . .

Three tiny elves,
As plump as Puck, at all things, and themselves,
Laughing, ran by her in the rain. They were
Chubby and rosy-cheek'd, with golden hair
Tossing behind (two girls, a boy); they held
Each other's hands, and so contrived to weld
Their gladnesses in one. No rain, though chill,
Could vex their joyous ignorance of ill.
Then, sorrowfully, her thoughts began to stray
Far out of London, many a mile away
Among the meadows:

In green Hertfordshire,
When lanes are white with May, the wreathing
briar
Wafts sweet thoughts to our spirits, if we pass
Between the hedges, and the happy grass
Beneath is sprinkled with the o'erblown leaves
Of wild white roses. In the long long eves
The cuckoo calls from every glimmering bower
And lone dim-lighted glade. The small church
tower

Smiles kindly at the village underneath.
Ah, God! once more to smell the rose's breath
Among those cottage gardens! There's a field
Past the hill-farm, hard by the little weald,
Was first to fill with cowslips every year;
The children used to play there. Could one hear
Once more that merry brook that leaves the leas
Quiet at eve, but through the low birch-trees
Is ever nois! Then at nutting-time
The woods are gayer than even in their prime;
And afterwards, there's something—hard to tell—
Full of home-feelings in the healthy smell,
Wide over all the red plough'd uplands spread
From burning weeds, what time the woods are dead.

"We were so young! We loved each other so!
Ah, yet . . . if one could live the winter through
(And winter's worst is o'er in March) . . . Who
knows?

The times might mend."

Then through her thoughts uprose
The menacing image of the imminent need
Of this bleak night.

"Two little mouths to feed!
No work! . . . and Willie sick! . . . and how to pay
To-morrow's rent?" . . .

She pluck'd herself away
From the bewildering river, and again
Stray'd onwards, onwards, through the endless rain
Among the endless streets, with weary gait
And dreary heart, trailing disconsolate
A draggled skirt with feeble feet slipshod.
The sky seem'd one vast blackness without God,
Or, if a god, a god like some that here
Be gods of earth, who, missing love, choose fear
For henchman, and so rule a multitude
They have subdued, but never understood.

The roaring of the wheels began anew,
And London down its dismal vortex drew
This wandering minion of the misery
Of millions.

III.

Grey and grisly 'neath this sky
Of bitter darkness gleam'd the long blind wall
Of that grim institute we English call
The poor-house.

We build houses for our poor,
Pay poor-rates, do our best, indeed, to cure
Their general sickness by all special ways,
If not successful, still deserving praise,
Because implying (which, for my part, I
Applaud intensely) that society
Is answerable, as a whole, to man
(Ay, and to Christ, since self-styled Christian!)
For how the poor it brings to birth may fare.
Though some French folks count this in chief the
affair

Of government, which pays for its mistakes
To revolution, when grim hunger breaks
His social fetter sometimes. Still, remains
This fact, a sad one,—spite of all our pains,
The poor increase among us faster still
Than means to feed them, though we tax the till
To cram the alms-box. Which is passing strange,
Seeing that this England in the world's wide range
Ranks wealthiest of the nations of the earth.
But thereby hangs a riddle, which is worth
The solving some day, if we can. That's all.

This woman, passing by that poor-house wall,
Shudder'd and thought. . . . No matter! 'twas a
thought
Only that made her shudder, till she caught
Her foot against a heap of something strange,
And wet, and soft, which made that shudder change
To one of physical terror.

'Twas as though
The multitudinous mud, to scare her so,
Had heap'd itself into a hideous heap,
Not human, sure, yet living. With a creep,
The thing, whatever it was, her chance foot spurn'd
Began to move, like humid earth upturn'd
By a snouted mole, disturb'd; or else, suppose
A swarm of feeding flies, when cluster'd close
About a lump of carrion, or a hive
Of brown-back'd bees. It seem'd to be alive
After this fashion . . . a collective mass
Of movement, making from the life it has,
Or seems to have, in common, though so small,
A sort of monstrous individual.
For, from the inward to the outward moved,
The hideous lump heaved slowly; slowly shoved
Layer after layer of soak'd and rotting rags
On each side, down it, to the sloppy flags,
Beneath its headless bulk; thus making space
For the upthrusting of the creature's face,
Or creature's self, whatever that might have been.
Whence suddenly emerging—to be seen,
One must imagine, rather than to see,
Since it look'd nowhere, neither seem'd to be
Surprised, or even conscious—there was thrust
(As though it came up thus because it must,
And not because it would) a human head,
With sexless countenance, that neither said
"To man, nor woman . . . I belong to you,"
But seem'd a fearful mixture of the two
United in a failure horrible
Of features, meant for human you might tell

By just so much as their lean wolfishness
Contrived more intense meaning to express
Than hunger-heated eye or snarling jaw
Of any real wolf.

Stricken with awe,
The woman, only very poor indeed,
Recoil'd before that creature past all need,
And past all help, too, being past all hope.
For stern and stark, against the stolid cope
Of the sad, rainy, and enormous night
That sexless face had fix'd itself upright
At once, and, as it were, mechanically,
With no surprise; as much as to imply
That it had done with this world everywhere,
And thenceforth look'd to Heaven; yet look'd not
there
With any sort of hope, or thankfulness
For things expected, but in grim distress,
From the mere want of gazing constantly
On darkness.

London's life went roaring by,
And took no notice of this thing at all.
It seem'd a heap of mud against the wall.
And if it were a vagrant . . . well? Why, there
The poor-house stands. The thing is *its* affair,
Not yours, nor mine; who pay the rates when due,
And trust in God, as all good Christians do.
And yet, if you or I had pass'd that way,
And noticed (which we did not so, I say,
Not ours the fault!) the creature crouching there,
I swear to you, O brother, and declare,
For my part, on my conscience, that, although
I never yet was so oppress'd, I know,
By instant awe of any king or queen,
Prelate or prince, whate'er the chance hath been,
As to have felt my heart's calm beating stopp'd,
Or my knees falter, yet I must have dropp'd
(Ay, and you too, friend, whom my heart knows
well)
In presence of that unapproachable,
Appalling majesty of misery;
Lifting its pale-faced protest to the sky
Silently against you, and me, no doubt,
And all the others of this social rout,
That calls itself fine names in modern books.

IV.

The woman, stone cold 'neath the stony looks
Of this rag-robed Medusa, shrank away
Abasht; not daring, at the first, to say
Such words as, meant for comfort, might have been
Too much like insult to that grim-faced queen
Or king, whiche'er it was, of wretchedness.
Her own much misery seem'd so much less
Than this, flung down before her, by God sent,
It may have been, for her admonishment.
But, at the last, she timidly drew near,
And whisper'd faintly in the creature's ear,
"Have you no home?"

No look even made reply;
Much less a word. But on the stolid sky
The stolid face stared ever.

"Are you cold?"
A sort of inward creepy movement roll'd
The rustled rags. And still the stolid face
Perused the stolid sky. Perhaps the case
Supposed was too self-evident to claim
More confirmation than what creeping came
To crumble those chill rags; subsiding soon,
As though to be unnoticed were a boon,

All kinds of notice having proved unkind.
Such creatures as men hunt are loth to find
The hole discover'd where they hide; and when
By chance you stir them out of it, they then
Make haste to feign to be already dead,
Hoping escape that way.

The woman said,
More faintly, "Are you hungry?"

There, at once
Finding intensest utterance for the nonce,
With such a howl 'twould chill your blood to hear,
The wolf-jaws wail'd out, "Hungry? ha, look here!"
And, therewith, fingers of a skeleton claw,
Tearing asunder those foul rags, you saw
. . . . Was it a woman's breast? It might be so.
It look'd like nothing human that I know.
She whose faint question such shrill response woke,
Stood stupified, stunn'd, sick.

V.

Just then there broke
Down the dim street (and any sound, just then,
Shaped from the natural utterance of men
To still that echoed howl, had brought relief
To her sick senses) a loud shout—"Stop thief!
Stop thief!" . . .

A man rush'd by those women—rush'd
So vehemently by them, that he brush'd
Their raggedness together; as he pass'd,
Dropp'd something on the pavement, and was fast
Wrapp'd in the rainy vapours of the night,
That, in a moment, smear'd him out of sight,
And, in a moment after, let emerge
The trampling crowd; which, all in haste to urge
Its honest chase, swept o'er those women twain,
Regardless, and rush'd on into the rain,
Leaving them both upon the slippery flags,
Bruised, trampled, rags in colloquy with rags,
And so—alone.

VI.

Meanwhile the wolfish face,
Resettled to its customary place,
Was staring as before into the sky,
Stolid. The other woman heavily
Gather'd herself together, bruised, in pain,
Half rose up, slipp'd on something, and again
Sank feebly back upon her hand.

But now,
What new emotion shakes her? Doth she know
What this is, that her fingers on the stone
Have felt, and, feeling, close so fiercely on?
This pocket-book? with gold enough within
To feed . . . Ah, God! and must it be a sin
To keep it? Were it possible to pay
With what its very robber flings away
For bread . . . bread! . . . bread! . . . and still
not starve, yet still
Be honest? . . .

"Were one doing very ill,
If . . . One should pray . . . if one *could* pray,
that's sure,
The strength would come. My God! we are so
poor!
So poor . . . 'tis terrible! To understand
Such things, one should be learn'd, and have at
hand
Ever so many good religious books,
And texts, and things. And then one starves. It
looks

So like a godsend. What doth the Book say
About 'the lions, roaring, seek their prey'?
And 'the young ravens'? 'Ye are more than
these.'

Ah, but one starves, though!"

Crouch'd upon her knees,
She dragg'd herself up close against the wall,
And counted the gold pieces.

"Food for all?
Us four? And that makes five. The rent to pay
To-morrow? Give me strength, dear God, to pray
'Thy will be done'! . . . What if it were God's
will

That one should keep it, . . . since one finds it?
Still

Have bread to eat? . . . till one can work, of
course.

Why else should God have sent it? Which is worse,
To starve, or . . . 'Tis as long as it is broad.

"And then, consider this, I pray, dear God!
Two little mouths already—and no bread.
And my poor man this three days sick in bed;
And no more needlework, it seems, for me
'Till times turn round. Who knows when that
will be?

Dear God, consider yet again . . . That's four
To feed already. Then a fifth? One more! . . .
However can we eke it out? Ah, me,
God's creatures to be left like this! Just see
How thin she is!"

Her hands about the thing
They clutch'd began to twitch. Still fingering
The gold convulsively, again she thought,
Or tried to think, of lessons early taught,
Easy to learn once, in the village school,
When to be honest seem'd the simple rule
For being happy, and of many a text
That task'd old Sundays; growing more perplex'd,
As, more and more, her giddy memory made
Haphazard catches at the words.

"Who said,
'Therefore I say unto you' (ah! 'twere sweet),
'Have no thought for your lives, what ye shall
eat'
(If that were possible), 'nor what to wear.'
Have no thought? that should mean, then, have no
care!

'Your Father knoweth of what things ye need
Before ye ask.' . . . 'The morrow shall take heed
For its own things.' . . . And still 'tis sure He
bade

The people pray, 'Give us our daily bread';
And elsewhere, 'Ask, and ye shall have!' And yet
One starves, I say.

"Ay! 'They that have shall get,'
That's somewhere too, and nearer fact, no doubt.
If the rich knew what the poor go without
Sometimes! They do their best for us, that's sure.
But still, the poor . . . they are so very poor!
'Whoever giveth to the least of these
Giveth to me.' Why one can give with ease
What is one's own . . . when *anything's* one's
own.

Ha! whose is this? There is no owner known.
God sent it here. Whose is it *now*?"

She stopp'd
And trembled. And the tempting treasure dropp'd
From her faint hand.

She scratch'd it up again,
And cried, "Mine, mine! be it the devil's gain

Or God's good gift. Sure, what folks *must*, folks
may,
And folks *must* live."

She gazed out every way
Along the gloomy street. In desert land,
To tempted saints mankind was more at hand
Than now it seem'd to this poor spirit pent
In populous city.

VII.

Hurriedly she bent
Above her grim companion, in whose ear
She mutter'd hoarse and quick, "Make haste! see
here!

There's bread enough for all of us. Get up!
Quick, quick; and come away. To-night we'll
sup,—

To-morrow we'll not starve . . . another day,
Another . . . and then, let come what come
may.
Off! off!"

No answer.

To the stolid sky
The stolid face was turn'd immovably.
The sky was dark: the face was dark. The face
And sky were silent both; you could not trace
The faintest gleam of light in the dark look
Of either.

Vehemently the woman shook
That miserable mass of rags. It let
Itself be shaken; did not strive to get
Up or away; said nought. A worried rat
So lets itself be shaken by a cat
Or mastiff, when the vermin's back, 'tis clear,
Is snapp'd, and there's no more to feel or fear.
"Oh, haste!"

No answer.

"It is late, late! Come!"

No answer. Those lean jaws were lock'd and dumb.
Then o'er the living woman's face there spread
Death's hue reflected.

"Late? too late!" she said.
"O Heaven, to die *thus*!"

With a broken wail,
She turn'd and fled fast, fast.

Fled whither?

VIII.

Pale
Through the thick vagueness of the vaporous night,
From the dark alley, with a clouded light
Two rheumy, melancholy lampions flare.
They are the eyes of the police.

In there,
Down the dark archway, through the greasy door,
Passionately pushing past the three or four
Complacent constables that cluster'd round
A costermonger, in the gutter found
Incapably, but combatively, drunk,
The woman hurried. Through the doorway slunk
A peaky, pinch'd-up child with frighten'd face,
Important witness in some murder-case
About to come before the magistrate
To-morrow. At a dingy table sat
The slim inspector, spectacled, severe,
Rapidly writing.

In a sort of fear
Of seeing it again, she shut her eyes
And flung it down there. With sedate surprise
The man look'd up.

... "Because I do not know
The owner, sir," she said. "A while ago
I found it. And there's money in it—much,
Oh, so much money, sir!"

A hungry touch
Of the defeated tempter made her wince
To see him count it. Such a short while since
She, too, had done the same.

"Your name? Address?"
She gave them. Easy, from the last, to guess
Their wretchedness who dwell in such a place.
The shrewd and practised eye perused her face
Contented, not surprised; for they that see
Crime oftenest, oftenest, too, see honesty
Where most of us would seldom look for it,
Or find it with surprise—in rags, to wit.

"Honest and poor. Deserves a large reward.
No doubt there'll be one."

"Ah, the times are hard,
So hard, God help us all; and, sir, indeed
We are so poor. Two little mouths to feed.
If we could only get some work to do!"

"Ah, married? out of work? and children two?
Mem. Let the owner know, if found. Good
night."

But still she stood there. He had turn'd to write.
She stood and eyed him with a dreary eye,
And did not move. He look'd up presently.
"Not gone yet? Eh? What more?"

"And, sir," she said,
"There's by the poor-house wall a woman dead.
There was no room within, sir, I suppose;
There are so many of them, Heaven knows.
'Tis hard for such as we to understand
How such things happen in a Christian land."

Her face twitch'd, and her cough grew fiercer
again,
As she pass'd out into the night and rain.

THE PARISH PARLIAMENT.

TWICE a year a bustling person of out-door aspect—this characteristic being manifested chiefly in his hat, which is strongly suggestive of an instrument for measuring the rainfall—knocks a treble knock at my door (he gives one over, as indicating a cut above the post) and leaves a paper, which, on perusal, I find to be the Queen's bill for governing me, judging me, fighting for me, and, generally (with a flag which has braved, a thousand years and a little over, the battle and the breeze), protecting my interests, both at home and abroad.

Twice a year, also, another bustling person, crowned with a hydrometer, knocks a treble knock—not to be confounded with the post either—and leaves a paper, which, on perusal, I find to be the Parish's bill for paving me, lighting me, draining me, policing me, causing me to love my poor neighbour—not by any means as myself—and for various other services of a kindred nature.

In the first pride of being a householder, I did not greatly trouble myself about these little

bills. I did not examine the items, but paid the totals at once—much sooner than there was any necessity for, as I have since found—and was proud to think that I was a taxpayer and ratepayer. When a leading article in a newspaper said "Taxpayers of Great Britain," I felt that I was one of the important and responsible class addressed. When bills in the shop windows of the High-street bore the heading, "Meeting of the Ratepayers of the Parish of St. Sniffens," I was proudly conscious that I was entitled to attend that meeting and take part in its deliberations; when I saw a regiment of cavalry ride up the road every morning for exercise, I derived considerable self-importance from the reflection that those magnificent men and beasts owed some degree of their magnificence to me a taxpayer. When I saw a street in my neighbourhood being taken up—which was often—I was gratified to think that the paviments owed some portion of their wages to me as a ratepayer.

But man soon becomes indifferent to the most priceless privileges, quickly grows accustomed to the highest dignities. I got used to the glory of being a taxpayer of Great Britain, and equally so to the distinction of being addressed as a ratepayer of the parish of St. Sniffens. I was not so ready to pay the little bills presented to me by the Queen and the Parish. I got into the way of telling the Queen and the Parish to call again to-morrow, or some time next week.

It is not until he feels the burden of the charges that are laid upon him, that a man begins to examine his bills, and closely inspect the items. It then becomes a very important object to see that he is not charged too much, and that he gets his money's worth for his money. I began, at last, to overhaul the bills presented to me by the Queen and the Parish, and a very cursory examination of their respective demands suggested matter for serious reflection and consideration. The first thing that strikes me on comparing the two accounts, is the disproportion which they bear to each other. The Parish, for merely local services, charges me five times as much as the Queen asks from me (directly, at least), for governing that empire upon which the sun never sets. Put indirect taxes out of the question, and say, for example, that I am one of the numerous class of persons in this parish of St. Sniffens who let lodgings. Here, then, is the bill which the Queen presents to me twice a year:

				s.	d.
House Tax	...	...	...	16	10½
Property Tax	...	...	...	11	6
				£1 8 4½	

The property tax is reimbursed to me by the landlord, so that I have to pay only sixteen shillings and tenpence-halfpenny every six months, or annually, the sum of one pound thirteen and ninepence.

Now for the bill presented by the Parish:

Poor, County, Burial Board, Police	s. d.
Rate, &c.	at 1 2
Lighting Rate	0 2
General Rate:	
For the Maintenance and Repair of Roads and Footways, Cleansing, Watering, and other Purposes ...	0 5½
For Payment of Interest on Bond Debts of, and Compensation to Officers of, Extinct Paving Trusts	0 1
	1 11½

One shilling and elevenpence-halfpenny on every pound of the sum at which I am rated, gives a total of about four pounds ten. To this there are to be added the sewers' rate, at three-halfpence, and the metropolitan main drainage rate, at twopence in the pound, bringing the whole amount for the half year to somewhere about five pounds ten.

Thus, then, for the year I pay:

To the Queen	£ 1 13 9
To the Parish	11 0 0

If I add income tax, and all the indirect taxes I pay on tea, sugar, wine, and the like, the Queen's bill will undoubtedly be heavier than the bill of the Parish; but it will not be *so very* heavy in proportion to the services rendered.

Now, it is not my purpose to complain of this. It is possible that the charges made upon me by the Parish are just and equitable, and that the proportion which they bear to the Queen's taxes is perfectly reasonable. But what strikes me as odd, is, that we should all look so sharp after the administration of the Queen, while we scarcely trouble ourselves to inquire how the Parish manages our affairs, or what becomes of the money which we pay into its exchequer.

We are all, from the highest to the lowest, deeply interested in the politics of the nation. We are for ever battling to guard the constitution, to promote reforms, to enforce economy and wise measures of finance. Every seven years, or whenever the administration fails to satisfy us, we turn the country upside down in the effort to return to parliament men whom we can trust to control and direct our public affairs. We move heaven and earth for this object. We make speeches, we write leading articles, we fight and struggle, as if for our very lives—nay, we even intimidate and bribe. Whatever may be the means employed, worthy or unworthy, we attain the end in view—we put the ablest men in the country into the Queen's cabinet to conduct the affairs of the nation. And having placed them there, we keep a constant watch upon them, noting and criticising their conduct from day to day, and from hour to hour. Every year in the month of April, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, our head cashier, lays his financial statement before the country. Every quarter the national balance-sheet is placed in the hands of the public. We know where the money comes from, we know where it goes to. We know also the character and capacity of every man

who assumes to take a part in managing the affairs of the nation. But what do we know of the men who manage the affairs of the parish—of the men to whom we annually entrust the disbursement of revenues larger than those of many a continental sovereign? Hitherto nothing; for few of us have cared to make inquiries in that direction. And yet it is no unimportant trust which we repose in these men. The services which it is their duty to render us touch us more nearly than the imperial acts of parliament, which we watch so narrowly. We depend upon them for the practical solution of one of the most difficult problems which has ever engaged the minds of statesmen and political economists—the just administration of the poor-law. We depend upon them for the purity of the air we breathe. It is for them to decide whether we shall live in the security of wholesomeness or run daily risk of death in the atmosphere of fever. Our very lives are in their hands. And what do we know of these men?

Until the other day, I, for one, knew nothing of them. Like thousands of my neighbours in this "large, important and populous parish of St. Sniffens," I took them upon trust. But now I do know something of them, and I am going to tell all whom it may concern, plainly, what I do know and have seen.

"I have lived all these years in the parish of St. Sniffens," said I to an old resident one evening, "and I am not aware that I am acquainted with any of the men who direct our local affairs. Who are they? What sort of persons are they?"

"To your first question," replied the old resident, "I answer that they are—grocers, tailors, publicans, cow-keepers, gardeners, pork-butchers, pawnbrokers, tax-collectors, and the like."

"In a large way of business, I suppose; or retired persons who have shown their aptitude for business by making their fortunes?"

"Not at all; mostly in a very small way of business, persons who have not made their fortunes, and are not likely to make them. To your second question, Come and see them."

"Friend, if a person at this time of night were to say to me, 'Come and see the legislators who conduct the affairs of the nation,' I should expect him to conduct me to the Houses of Parliament, or the Reform and Carlton Clubs. Whither dost thou lead, since the vestry does not, I believe, meet at night?"

"To the Spotted Dog."

"The Spotted Dog!"

"The Spotted Dog. The landlord is a vestry-man; in his parlour you will find assembled in social, not solemn, conclave the local section of the parish Arcopagus. Come."

After a short walk we arrived at the Spotted Dog. It is a public-house of the third class, with no pretensions to an hotel department, nor even a select bar—a pint-of-porter-and-a-screw-looking house, with sloppy counters, dingy battered pots, and a floor encrusted with dirt.

We passed through the gloomy bar and entered a little pug's parlour, whose floor was carpeted with sawdust and set out with spittoons. The speaker had taken the chair, at the end of the room, but the Areopagus had not yet assembled. The speaker, a stolid-looking wooden-headed man, sat in moody silence, smoking a long clay pipe, and taking an occasional sip from a half-pint pewter.

"Jem," said the chairman to the potboy, who acted as waiter, in his shirt-sleeves; "another 'alf pint, and don't bring this here hocked thing of a pot as ain't got ne'er a handle."

"Who's he?" I asked.

"A gentleman of the vestry, a great man in the parish, one of the Works committee."

Presently in bounces a dapper little man with a blue apron, and a very shiny head of hair. He addresses the chair.

"Well, old Buttertub, and 'ow do you find yourself?"

"Who are you calling Buttertub," says the chairman, very indignant.

"Lor, he doesn't like it," says the dapper little man, winking at us. "Jem" (this to the potboy), "'alf a pint like lightning, sharp's the word, quick's the motion—slap bang here we are again, here we are again, here we are again!" And the dapper little man goes up to the looking-glass, twists a greasy curl round each ear, and does a little dance to the tune.

"Who is he?" I ask.

"Gentleman of the vestry, member of the sanitary committee."

"Oh, indeed, 'I said."

And now the parish legislators come trooping in thick and fast, and almost every one as he passes the landlord, who is sitting smoking a long pipe near the door, facetiously puts himself in a fighting attitude, gives a pantomimic slap, and pretends to have received a severe blow in the eye. After this performance they pass on to their seats, each one as he sits down taking up a long clay pipe, and clearing out the bowl with his little finger. Orders now pour upon Jem the potboy in a volley, and I observe that they are mostly for half pints and screws. When the half pints are brought, the legislators look into them to see that they are quite full, then dip the stems of their pipes into the porter, and forthwith begin to smoke.

Look round the room now that they are all in their places solemnly puffing. With the exception of the two visitors, they are all parish authorities—all gentlemen of the vestry, or officials of some kind. Before they begin to betray themselves in speech, you can scarcely credit that they are all men of the same class. Yonder is one respectably dressed in black; who, judging from his appearance, might be a City merchant; next to him is a man without any shirt collar, his neck swathed in a wisp of silk handkerchief—to all appearance, a groom. Opposite sits a stolid pig-faced man, who might be the keeper of a toll-gate, or a porter at Doctors' Commons. Close by is a heavy swell with curled moustache, velvet collar, great expanse of gold chain on a

black satin waistcoat, and glossy hat with turned up brim. Next to him a bricklayer-looking person, with his trousers turned up at the ankles, and the marks of lime on his slop jacket. There are also two or three young men whom you might judge to be carpenters, who had "cleaned themselves" for an evening party. While they preserve silence, they seem to be a most heterogeneous assembly. But they are all hail-fellows-well-met here. I observe that they pride themselves upon their powers of repartee, or, as it is called here, "chaff." They stab each other through their pursuits. Thus one, who is a poulterer, is hailed as "Turkey-cock," who retorts by calling his assailant "old Pork-and-peas-pudd'n." A gentleman in the building line, is addressed as "Chimbley-pots;" and the chairman is known to the company generally, as "Wooden'ead." Says one, "Chimbley-pots, where 'ave you bin to-day?" To which Chimbley-pots replies, "Bin on the stink." Which, on being interpreted, I find means that, as a member of the sanitary committee, he has been inspecting nuisances. "I say, old Pork-and-peas-pudd'n, 'ow much do you give Chimbley-pots for looking the other way when he passes the trotter-shop?"

"Well, I gives him good weight when he comes to my shop, and that's more nor he gets at yourn."

"Ah, he 'ad you there, Charley!" The chairman says to his neighbour that Charley "got one for hisself that time." The heavy swell interposes, and says that such hobservations is disrespectful to the 'ouse.

"I'll 'ave a strait-jacket made for Charley," says the landlord, "and take him down to 'Anwell."

"Or Colney 'Atch," says another.

Presently the conversation turns upon the political affairs of the parish, when the honourable members assume a semi-parliamentary manner, and use fine words. They "join issue" with each other, when they mean to do exactly the opposite; they talk about bringing matters to a quietus, apparently meaning a conclusion or a climax; a sanitary committee-man declares five shillings a day as the pay of an inspector of nuisances to be "abnormal," by which I understand him to mean "too little."

"Quite enough too," says a head of the paving department. "What do you do with it? Why, ride up and down in an omnibus, and drink drains."

"Instead of cleansing of 'em," says another.

"Look here, Joe"—this as a warning and a piece of advice to the last speaker—"if you want to get into the vestry, you keep quiet. Hear, see, and say nothink."

It is evident that the person who made that cutting remark about the cleansing of the drains has aspirations in the direction indicated; for he turns very red in the face, and says, apologetically, that he meant no offence.

Surely, I thought, my friend is hoaxing me; these cannot be the men to whom we entrust the management of the affairs of this great and important parish. Are these the guardians of

the poor? Are these the persons to whom are submitted the difficult scientific questions involved in providing for the sanitary condition of, not simply the parish, but the great metropolis itself? On expressing some incredulity, my friend said:

"Very well, if you *can't* believe it, attend the vestry meeting to-morrow, and you will see nearly all these men seated at the board, taking part in the work of legislation."

I did attend the vestry meeting, and found them all there—Wooden-head, Pork-and-peas-pudd'n, Turkey-cock, Charley, the landlord of the Spotted Dog, and several others. There they were in parish parliament assembled. The speaker was in the chair—a black-leather hall-porter one, with the royal arms on the back of it—and the gentlemen of the vestry (about forty of them altogether) were seated on either side of a line of polished black mahogany tables of the public-house pattern.

Near the chair sat a bustling little man—one who had drunk his half pint and smoked his pipe at the Spotted Dog the night before—who appeared to be the leader of the house, as he was always getting up to give explanations and make interpellations. He had not an H in his alphabet, and dispensed with the rules of Lindley Murray altogether; but he appeared to be looked up to as a great orator and statesman. He had put on his official manner to-day, sipped water from a tumbler every now and then—quite differently from the way in which he sipped his porter—and always parted his coat-tails when he sat down. I observed that this parting of the coat-tails on sitting down, was a great point with them. None of them did it at the Spotted Dog, but they all did it here. It was evidently considered to be a graceful parliamentary action. On commencing an address, most of the orators began with "'AVING." "'AVING" been indooost to take this step, we was hoblighed to go a step furdur." "Then," says another, "you have gone furdur than the lor allows." "Such a thing was never 'eard of in the 'istory of the parish," says a third.

"Order, order! Mr. Chairman, 'ow many people do you allow to speak at once?"

Mr. Chairman knocks on the table and restores order.

Meantime, a crusty old Thersites, who is sitting beside me in the gallery, chimes in with a chorus of comment.

"Pretty lot, ain't they?" he says.

I make no reply.

Chorus again: "I offered them ten pounds once, if they would do with it what I told them."

Being interested now, I asked, "What was that?"

"Buy rope enough to hang themselves."

Conclude that my friend is disappointed at not being in the vestry. Perhaps he neglected the maxim to keep quiet, hear, see, and say nothing.

There is another angry discussion about a pump reported on by the sanitary committee.

High words and recriminations are passing, when a vestryman near the end of the table endeavours to throw oil upon the waters—not of the pump, but of the discussion.

"Really, gentlemen, we are getting into a very un'olsesome state."

Chorus: "I should think you were! Why, sir" (grumbling this to me), "there is a man in that vestry who can neither read nor write; a member of that vestry was pulled up for short weights; another member of that vestry—"

"Hush, hush, you're interrupting the proceedings."

"Pro-ceedings, indeed!"

I noticed that money was voted away with very little discussion indeed, and always nem. con.

When a question of paving came up, I thought that now surely there was a matter before the vestry which these men would be capable of handling. But I soon found that there was a great diversity of opinion as to the best time of the year for laying down paving-stones. One said that the best month was "Janivery," another favoured "Febovary," a third maintained that such work should only be done in March; a fourth declared for April, and one gentleman actually went the length of June. Eventually, perhaps on the principle of splitting the difference, it was decided that the paving in question should be commenced on the first of March.

Chorus: "I wish every man Jack of them were laid down under it!"

The house here adjourned, and Chorus descended the stairs with the declared intention of insulting the honourable members to their faces.

In conclusion, I find that the gentlemen of the vestry in this large and populous parish of St. Sniffens are held in the greatest contempt by all who know them.

FORM-SICKNESS.

THERE is a mysterious disease which the doctors find difficult of diagnosis, and from which foreign conscripts are said to suffer. They call it nostalgia, or le mal du pays—in plainer English, home-sickness. We have all read how the band-masters of the Swiss regiments in the French service were forbidden to play the Ranz des Vaches, lest the melancholy children of the mountains, inspired by the national melody, should run home too quickly to their cows—that is to say, desert. That dogs will pine and fret to death for love of the masters they have lost, is an ascertained fact, and I have been told that the intelligent and graceful animal, the South American llama, if you beat, or overload, or even insult him, will, after one glance of tearful reproach from his fine eyes, and one meek wail of expostulation, literally lie himself down and die. Hence, the legend that the bāt-men, ere they load a llama, cover his head with a poncho, or a grego, or other drapery, in order that his sus-

ceptibilities may not be wounded by a sight of the burden he is to endure; a pretty conceit vividly transposed into English in a story about a cab-horse whose eyes were bandaged by his driver, lest he should be ashamed of the shabbiness of the fare who paid but sixpence for under a mile's drive. I was never south of the Isthmus, and never saw a llama, save in connexion with an overcoat in a cheap tailor's show-card; but I am given to understand that what I have related is strictly true.

If the lower animals, then, be subject to nostalgia, and if they be as easily killed by moral as by physical ailments, why should humanity be made of sterner stuff? After all, there may be such things as broken hearts. With regard to home-sickness, however, I hold that, as a rule, that malady is caused less by absence from home than by the deprivations of the comforts and enjoyments which home affords. Scotchmen and Irishmen are to be found all over the world, and get on pretty well wherever they are; but a Scot without porridge to sup, or an Irishman without buttermilk to drink at breakfast, is always more or less miserable. The Englishman, accustomed to command, to compel, and to trample difficulties under his feet, carries his home-divinities with him, and has no sooner set up his tent in Kedar than he establishes one supplementary booth for making up prescriptions in accordance with the ritual of the London Pharmacopœia, another for the sale of pickles, pale ale, and green tea, and a third for the circulation of tracts intended to convert the foreigners among whom he is to abide. He suffers less, perhaps, from home-sickness than any other wanderer on the face of the earth; for he sternly refuses to look upon his absence from his own country as anything but a temporary exile; he demands incessant postal communication with home, or he will fill the English newspapers with the most vehement complaints; he will often—through these same newspapers—carry on controversies, political or religious, with adversaries ten thousand miles away; and after an absence from England of twenty years he will suddenly turn up at a railway meeting, or in the chair at a public dinner; bully the board; move the previous question; or, in proposing the toast of the evening, quote the statistics of the Cow-cross Infirmary for Calves, as though he had never been out of Middlesex. In short, he no more actually expatriates himself than does an attaché to an English embassy abroad, who packs up Pall-Mall in his portmanteau, parts his hair down the middle, and carries a slender umbrella—never under any circumstances unfurled—in the streets of Teheran.

But are you aware that there is another form of nostalgia which afflicts only Europeans, and, so far as I know, is felt only in one part of the world? Its symptoms have not hitherto been described, and I may christen it Form-sickness. I should wish to have Mr. Ruskin, Mr. Stirling, and Mr. Beresford Hope, on the medical board to whom I submitted my views on this disease; for it is one architecturally and æsthetically

occult. This Form-sickness begins to attack you after you have resided some time—say a couple of months—in the United States of America. Its attacks are more keenly felt in the North than in the South; for in the last-named parts of the Union there are fig and orange trees, and wild jungles and cane brake—some of the elements of Form, in fact. It is the monotony of form, and its deficiencies in certain conditions: that is to say, curvature, irregularity, and light and shade, that make you sick in the North. I believe that half the discomfort and the uneasiness which most educated Englishmen experience from a protracted residence in the States, springs from the outrage offered to their eye in the shape of perpetual flat surfaces, straight perspectives, and violent contrasts of colour. There are no middle tints in an American landscape. In winter, it is white and blue; in spring, blue and green; in summer, blue and brown; in autumn, all the colours of the rainbow, but without a single neutral tint. The magnificent October hues of the foliage on the Hudson and in Vermont simply dazzle and confound you. You would give the world for an instant of repose—for a grey tower, a broken wall, a morsel of dun thatch. The immensity of the views is too much for a single spectator. Don't you remember how Banvard's gigantic panorama of the Mississippi used to make us first wonder and then yawn? Banvard is everywhere in the States; and so enormous is the scale of the scenery in this colossal theatre, that the sparse dramatis personæ are all but invisible. An English landscape painter would scarcely dream of producing a picture, even of cabinet size, without a group of peasants, or children, or a cow or two, or a horse, or at least a flock of geese, in some part of the work. You shall hardly look half a dozen times out of the window of a carriage of an express train in England, without seeing something that is alive. In America, the desolation of Emptiness pervades even the longest settled and the most thickly populated States. How should it be otherwise? How should you wonder at it when, as in a score of instances, not more people than inhabit Hertfordshire are scattered over a territory as large as France? One of the first things that struck me when I saw the admirable works of the American landscape painters—of such men as Church and Kensett, Bierstadt and Cropely, and Hart—was the absence of animal life from their scenes. They seemed to have been making sketches of the earth before the birth of Adam.

This vacuous vastness is one of the provocatives of Form-sickness. To the European, and especially to the Englishman, a country without plenty of people, pigs, poultry, haystacks, barns, and cottages, is as intolerable as the stage of the grand opera would be if it remained a whole evening with a sumptuously set scene displayed, but not a single actor. New England is the state in which, perhaps, the accessories of life are most closely concentrated; but even in

New England you traverse walks into which it appears to you that the whole of Old England might be dropped with no more chance of being found again than has a needle in a pottle of hay. But it is when you come to dwell in towns that Form-sickness gets its firmest grip of you. In a city of three or four hundred thousand inhabitants, you see nothing but mere flat surfaces, straight lines, right angles, parallel rows of boards and perpendicular palings. The very trees lining the streets are as straight as walking-sticks. Straight rows of rails cut up the roadway of the straight streets. The hotels are marble packing-cases, uniformly square, and pierced with many windows; the railway cars and street omnibuses are exact parallelopeds; and, to crown all, the national flag is ruled in parallel crimson stripes, with a blue quadrangle in one corner, sown with stars in parallel rows. Philadelphia, from its rectangularity, has been called the "chess-board city;" Washington has been laid out on a plan quite as distressingly geometrical; and nine-tenths of the other towns and villages are built on gridiron lines. There are some crooked streets in Boston, and that is why Europeans usually show a preference for Boston over other American cities; while in the lower part of New York, a few of the thoroughfares are narrow, and deviate a little from the inexorable straight line. In most cases there is no relaxation of the cord of tension. There are no corners, nooks, archways, alleys; no refuges, in fact, for light and shade. In the State of Virginia, there is one of the largest natural arches in the world; but in American architecture a curved vault is one of the rarest of structures. The very bridges are on piers without arches. Signboards and trade effigies, it is true, project from the houses, but always at right angles. This rigidity of outline makes its mark on the nomenclature and on the manners of the people. The names of the streets are taken from the letters of the alphabet and the numerals in the Ready Reckoner. I have lived in G-street. I have lived in West Fourteenth, between Fifth and Sixth Avenues. Mathematical calculation is the basis of daily life. You are fed at the hotels at stated hours; and the doors of the dining-room are kept locked until within a moment of the gong's sounding. At some tables d'hôte, fifty negro waiters stand mute and immobile behind the chairs of two hundred and fifty guests, and at a given signal uncover with the precision of clockwork, one hundred dishes. These are not matters of opinion; they are matters of fact. Routine pursues you everywhere: from the theatre to the church: from the fancy fair to the public meeting. In the meanest village inn, as in the most palatial hotel, there is a travellers' book, in which you are bound to enter your name. You may assume an alias; but you must be Mr. Somebody. You cannot be, as in England, the "stout party in Number Six," or the "tall gent in the Sun." You must shake hands with every one to whom you are introduced; you must drink when you are asked, and then ask the asker to drink—though I am bound to

say that this strictly mathematical custom has, owing to the piteous protests of Europeans, somewhat declined of late. If you enter a barber's shop to be shaved, a negro hands you a check bearing a number, and you must await your turn. When your turn arrives, you must sit in a certain position in a velvet-covered fauteuil with high legs, and must put your feet up on a stool on a level therewith. The barber shaves you, not as you like but as *he* likes, powders you, strains a napkin over your face, sponges you, shampoos you, pours bay rum and eau-de-Cologne on your head, greases, combs you out, and "fixes" you generally. The first time I was ever under the hands of an American barber, I rose as soon as he had laid down his razor, and made a move in the direction of the washhand basin. He stared at me as though I had gone mad. "Hold on!" he cried, in an authoritative accent. "Hold on! Guess I'll have to wash you up." That I should be washed up or "fixed," was in accordance with the mathematical code.

This all but utter absence of variety of form, of divergence of detail, of play of light and shade, are productive in the end of that petulant discontented frame of mind—of that soreness of spirit—with which almost every tourist who has visited the Great Republic has come at last to regard its civilisation. As a rule, the coarser the traveller's organisation—the less he cares about art or literature—the better he will get on in America. I met a fellow-countryman once, the son of an English earl, at one of the biggest, most mathematical, and most comfortable, of the New York hotels, who told me that he should be very well content to live there for ten years. "Why," he said, "you can have five meals a day if you like." This is the kind of traveller, the robust hardly strong-stomached youth, fresh from a public school, who goes to America and does not grumble. But do you take, not a travelled Englishman, but a travelled American, one who has been long in Europe, and has appreciated the artistic glories of the Continent, and you will discover that he finds it almost impossible to live in his own country, or "board" at an American hotel. Every continental city has its colony of cultivated Americans, good patriots and staunch republicans, but who are absolutely afraid to go back to their native land. They dread the mathematical system. Those who, for their families' or their interests' sake, are compelled to return, live at hotels conducted, not on the American, but on the European system—that is to say, where they can dine, breakfast, or sup, not as the landlord likes, but as they themselves like. Those who are wealthy, shut themselves up in country-houses, or splendid town mansions, surrounded by books, and pictures, and statues, and tapestry, and coins from Europe, until their existence is almost ignored by their countrymen. In no country in the world are so many men of shining talents, of noble mind, of refined tastes, buried alive as in the United States.

That which I call the mathematical system is only another name for a very stringent and

offensive social tyranny; and, did we not remember that humanity is one mass of inconsistencies and contradictions, it would be difficult to understand how this social despotism could be made compatible with the existence of an amount of political liberty never before equalled in this world. Until 1861, the American citizen was wholly and entirely free; and now that the only pretext for the curtailment of his liberties has disappeared, he will enter upon, it is to be hoped, a fresh lease of freedom, as whole and entire as of yore. How far the social tyranny spoken of has extended, would be almost incredible to those who have not resided in America. "Whatever you do," said an American to me on the first day of my landing in the States, "don't live in a boarding-house where you are treated as one of the family. They'll worry you to death by wanting to take care of your morals." To have one's morals taken care of is a very excellent thing; but, as a rule, you prefer to place the curatorship thereof in the hands of your parents and guardians, or of your spiritual director, or, being of mature age, of yourself. "Taking care of morals" is apt to degenerate into petty impertinence and espionage. One of the most eminent of living sculptors in New York, told me that for many years he experienced the greatest difficulty in pursuing the studies incidental to, and indeed essential to, his attaining excellence in his profession, owing to the persistent care taken of his morals by the lady who officiated as housekeeper in the chambers where he lived. It must be premised that these chambers formed part of a building specially erected for the accommodation of artists, and with a view to their professional requirements. Our sculptor had frequent need of the assistance of female models, and the "Janitress," as the lady housekeeper was called, had a virtuously indignant objection to young persons who posed as Venuses or Hebes, in the costume of the period, for a dollar an hour. She could only be induced by the threat of dismissal from the proprietor of the studio building, to grant admission to the models at all; and even then she would await their exit at her lodge gate, and abuse them as they came down-stairs. Much more acclimatised to models was the good sister of William Etty, who used to seek out his Venuses for him; but a transition state of feeling was that of the wife of Nollekens, the sculptor, who, whenever her husband had a professional sitter, and the day was very cold, used to burst into the studio with a basin in her hand, crying: "You nasty, good for nothing hussy, here's some hot mutton broth for you."

To recapitulate a little. Form-sickness is the unsatisfied yearning for those broken lines, irregular forms, and infinite gradations of colour—reacting as those conditions of form invariably do on the manners and characteristics of the people—which are only to be met with in very old countries. However expensively and elegantly dressed a man may be, he is apt to feel uncomfortable in a bran-new hat, a bran-new coat and continuations, and bran-new boots

and gloves; and I believe that if he were compelled to put on a bran-new suit every morning, he would cut his throat before a month was over. The sensation of entire novelty is one inseparable from the outward aspect of America. You can smell the paint and varnish; the glue is hardly dry. The reasons for this are very obvious. American civilisation is an independent self-reliant entity. It has no connexions, or ties, or foregatherings with any predecessors on its own soil. It is not the heir of long entailed patrimony. It is, like Rodolph of Hapsburg, the first of its race. It has slain and taken possession. In Great Britain we have yet Stonehenge and some cairns and cromlechs to remind us of the ancient Britons' acts; but in the settled parts of the United States, apart from the Indian names of some towns and rivers, there remains not the remotest vestige to recal the existence of the former possessors of the soil. There are yet outlying districts, millions of acres square, where Red Indians hunt, and fight, and steal, and scalp; but American civilisation marches up, kills or deports them—at all events, entirely "improves" them off the face of the land. They leave no trace behind, and the bran-new civilisation starts up in a night, like a mushroom. Where yesterday was a wigwam, to-day is a Doric meeting-house, also a bank, and a grand pianoforte; where yesterday the medicine-man wove his incantations, to-morrow an advertising corn-cutter opens his shop; and in place of a squaw, embroidering moccasins, and cudgelled by the drunken brave her spouse, we have a tight-laced young lady, with a chignon and a hooped skirt, taking academical degrees, and talking shrilly about woman's rights. A few years since, the trapper and pioneer race formed a transition stage between the cessation of barbarism and the advent of civilisation. The pioneer was a simple-minded man, and so soon as a clearing grew too civilised for him, he would shoulder his hatchet and rifle, and move further out into the wilds. I have heard of one whose signal for departure was the setting up of a printing press in his settlement. "Those darned newspapers," he remarked, "made one's cattle stray so." But railway extension, and the organisation in the Atlantic cities, of enormous caravans of emigrants, are gradually thinning the ranks of the pioneers. In a few years, Natty Bumppo, Leatherstocking, the Deerslayer, the Pathfinder, will be legendary. Civilisation moves now in block. There is scarcely any advanced guard. Few skirmishers are thrown out. The main body swoops down on the place to be occupied, and civilises it in one decided charge.

It may be advantageous to compare such a sudden substitution of a settled community for a howling wilderness, with the slow and tentative growth of our home surroundings. European civilisation resembles the church of St. Eustache at Paris, in whose exterior Gothic niches and pinnacles, Byzantine arches, Corinthian columns, Composite cornices, and Renais-

sance doorways, are all jumbled together. Every canon of architectural taste is violated; but the parts still cohere; a very solid façade still rears its head; and, at a certain distance, its appearance is not inharmonious. At Cologne, in Germany, they will point out to you an ancient building, here a bit of Lombard, here a morsel of florid Gothic, here some unmistakable Italian, and here ten feet of genuine old Roman wall. There are many Christian churches in Italy whose walls are supported by columns taken from Pagan temples. The entire system, physical as well as moral, has been the result of growth upon growth, of gradual intercalation and emendation, of perpetual cobbling and piecing and patching; and although at last, like Sir John Cutler's silk stockings, which his maid darned so often with worsted that no part of the original fabric remained, the ancient foundations may have become all but invisible: they are still latent, and give solidity to the superstructure. We look upon the edifice, indeed, as we would on something that has taken root, that has something to rest upon. We regard it as we would that hoary old dome of St. Peter's at Rome. We know how long it took to build, and we trust that it will endure for ever. The bran-new civilisation we are apt to look at more in the light of a balloon. It is very astonishing. We wonder, however, it contrived to rise so high, and how long it will be before it comes down again; and we earnestly hope that it will not burst.

It is not necessary to avow any partisan kind of predilection for one phase of civilisation as against another. It is sufficient to note the fact: that Europeans the least prejudiced, and the most ardent admirers of the political institutions of the United States, very soon grow fretful and uneasy there, and are unable to deny, when they come back, that the country is not an elegant or a comfortable one to look upon. I attribute this solely to æsthetic causes. I do not believe that Englishmen grumble at America because the people are given to expectoration, or guessing, or calculating, or trivialities of that kind. Continental Europeans expectorate quite as freely as the Americans, and for rude cross questioning of strangers, I will back a German against the most inquisitive of New Englanders. It is in the eye that the mischief lies. It is the bran-new mathematical outline of Columbia that drives the Englishman into Form-sickness, and ultimately to the disparagement and misrepresentation of a very noble country. In many little matters of detail, American manners differ from ours; but in the aggregate we are still one family. They speak our language—very frequently with far greater purity and felicity of expression than we ourselves do—they read our books, and we are very often glad and proud to read theirs. They have a common inheritance with us in the historic memories we most prize. If they would only round off their corners a little! If they would only give us a few crescents and ovals in lieu of "blocks!" If they would only

remember that the circle as well as the rectangle is a figure in mathematics, and that the curve is, after all, the line of beauty!

CHESTERFIELD JUNIOR.

A SON'S ADVICE TO HIS FATHER.

MR. CHESTERFIELD, sen., begs to forward to the Editor, certain letters which he has lately received from his son. Mr. C. does so, because he thinks it desirable that it should be made known what a pass things are rapidly coming to in this country. These letters, let it be distinctly understood, are from Mr. Chesterfield's son—his own son—whom Mr. C. dandled in his arms a score of years ago, when this young gentleman's costume consisted of a white robe elaborately worked about the breast, and nearly a yard longer in the skirts than the exigencies of the infant's stature demanded. The letters follow.

My dear Father. It has been the custom, time out of mind, as you are probably aware, for those who have lived a great many years in the world—parents, guardians, uncles, and elderly persons generally—to give the result of their experience of human life, their advice, in short, to such young men—be they the sons, wards, nephews, or even the juniors only of the above—as came in their way. The advice given by Polonius to Laertes—not bad in its way—and the letters of our distinguished namesake to his son, are both pretty well known, and may be taken as specimens of what I mean. This custom, then, is an old one.

Sir, it is an old one, and, like a great many other old things, it needs to be reformed. It should be obsolete. It won't do. It was all very well once, but times are altered. Things have changed so much during the last few years, that your experience—of a state of affairs, remember, altogether different from the present—is really of no use whatever. All our theories are based, or should be, upon facts. When the facts are altered, what becomes of the theories?

But I will go a step further than this, and venture to propound something which at first sight may seem a little startling, but which, on reflection, will, I believe, appear rational. I make so bold as to assert that not only are you—the elders generally—in no position to offer advice to us the juniors, but that you yourselves actually require now and then a word of counsel from us, to guide you through the dangers and difficulties of modern life.

Why, after all, how *should* it be otherwise? Look, as I said before, how everything has altered within the last few years. We have turned all things topsy-turvy. Of what use is your experience to you? You have to unlearn, for the most part, what you formerly took great pains to learn. You have to remodel almost all your ideas. And then—I speak with the utmost respect—you learned so little in what you are pleased to call the good old times.

There were no examinations in those days. A man, for instance, who happened to have the instincts of a sailor, could, preposterous as it seems, get into the navy without being able to spell with certainty, or might hold a commission in the army with but an indifferent knowledge of the solar system. Why, even the *Times* newspaper informed us not long ago that society had no right to expect persons over thirty years of age to know anything, for the simple reason that the education of all such individuals terminated before the period of competitive examinations had arrived.

Under these circumstances, worthy sir, I think your common sense—with which, I confess, that you appear to me to be very well endowed—will show you that among the many changes which mark this great and glorious age must be ranked a considerable alteration in the relative positions of father and son—of senior and junior. Consider how splendidly we have been educated. Consider how glibly we could answer all sorts of questions on scientific and other subjects, by which I firmly believe that you and your contemporaries would be instantly gravelled. Try us with anything you like; the distance between the planet Mercury and the moon; the manner of the formation of the old red sandstone; dodge us about with any number of teasers of this sort, and see if we are not ready with answers. I am afraid, sir, that you are but poorly informed on such matters; indeed, I was not a little shocked to hear your expressions of opinion the other day when we were down at the sea-side together, and when you flatly contradicted Professor Barnacles, simply because he asserted that the cliff on which you were standing was entirely composed of the remains of minute creatures.

But it is not only in matters of learning, scientific or otherwise, that I feel convinced that we of the new generation are in a position to give some valuable information to you of the old. This is only a very small matter. It is on social questions, dear sir, that you want advice most. Hints as to how you can best adapt yourself to the changed position in which you now find yourself, how you may escape from the social snares by which you see yourself surrounded, how you may meet the difficulties which will spring up in your way when advancing along a road of which you know nothing—how, in short, you are to get through that portion of life which remains before you, creditably, sagaciously, securely.

Influenced, then, entirely by a desire for your welfare, my good sir, it is my intention to send you from time to time a few words of counsel and direction on such matters as appear to me likely to prove difficulties and stumbling-blocks in your way; for you must remember, sir, that this period which is such a puzzle to you, who have formed your ideas under circumstances so different, is not a puzzle to us juniors, for the simple reason that we are used to it, and have known no other.

I am sometimes, dear but inexperienced sir,

extremely uneasy about you. You cause me a vast deal of very anxious thought. I have observed you much of late—more, probably, than you imagine—and it seems to me that you are at times disposed to fight against the inevitable march of modern events, and to set yourself in opposition to the irresistible tide of progress. Sometimes when listening to what I will venture to call the conversation of the period, you appear almost bewildered. The sentiments expressed seem to be too much for your powers of endurance. The instance I have already quoted of your reception of the remarks of Professor Barnacles on the formation of certain cliffs, is a case in point; and I now remember, that on another occasion when the same gentleman was discoursing on the Darwinian theory of development, you exclaimed, “Why, bless my life and soul, does the man mean to tell me that my grandfather was a monkey?”

Do not think, however, for a moment that I want you to attempt too much. With your enthusiastic temperament and your very strong views, it would never do for you to attempt to live in all things the life of the day. Be satisfied, respected sir, with a negative course. Do not by any means distress your anxious son by outraging in word or in deed the feeling of the period, but, on the other hand, do not attempt to keep pace with the foremost performers in the race which we are all more or less engaged in running.

One of the first great changes of modern times, by which one cannot fail to be struck, and of which I am reminded by my last sentence, is the change in our pace. Within the memory of a person of your respectable age, this has passed from a steady trot, which might be long and innocuously sustained, to a tearing gallop, such as few of us can keep up for any length of time. Don't *you* attempt it, sir, whatever you do. It is this, viewing the subject largely, which is the principal and chief of all our changes, and it is to this that most of our new developments of personal character, and the variations of our bodily and mental health, are mainly traceable. Complaint is made in these days—and, Heaven knows, not without cause—of the sad increase of nervous diseases and brain affections. We find men engaged in scientific pursuits or great commercial and financial undertakings; occupations of which it is a leading characteristic that he who engages in them must work against time, must come to as many important decisions—in any one of which a false move would be fatal—in the course of a day, as needed a few years since to be arrived at in a month. We note of such men, when we meet them socially, that they are getting dull, absent, wanting in perception. In some rare moment of his leisure we hold converse with a man of this sort. We walk about his garden with him for the ten minutes he has to spare before he starts, by train, for the City. By-and-by he leaves us, as we suppose to make ready for his journey. But he does nothing of the kind. He steals away to his dressing-room and blows his

brains out. And why does he do this? It is not, as would once have been the case, because he is in pecuniary difficulties, or that he dreads some threatening exposure. It is because—and here is the modern peculiarity of the thing—the man is so desperately perplexed, his ideas are so involved and knotted and tangled together, that he can bear it no longer, and so he cuts the knot and gets away.

Upon men of a different temperament, troubles of the same sort will have a different effect. No need for them to accelerate the end with their own violent hands. It comes to them of itself. "So-and-so is in a very bad way," his friends say. "He complains very much; his work is intolerable to him; he is evidently incapable of enjoyment of any kind, social or otherwise; his spirits are wretched; what can be the matter with him?" The matter is, that he is dying. He is dying slowly, by inches. Dying because he has tried to keep up with the pace at which his competitors run, and he has not been able. It is the strain, the anxiety, the excitement that kills, even more than the mere labour. The fate of this man and of the other is told in a word; but what words can describe the agony that each of them has endured in the years, and months, and days which have preceded and ushered in the end? What sort of a time was that, when the suffering wretch first began to feel the approach of what was to follow? A general loss of perception, perhaps, would be one of his first symptoms, the images of things not biting so distinctly on his faculties as before; his ideas less clear, less numerous, his sensibilities less acute. And this combined incongruously enough with an excessive irritability and intolerance of external sources of annoyance, so that little daily troubles, which in a healthy condition would not have distressed him, become now terrible sources of discomfort, while small responsibilities weigh upon him intolerably, with a bug-bear terror in their aspect which their intrinsic importance in no way justifies. And then his memory begins to play him tricks. He is unable to keep his engagements in mind; he carries a letter in his pocket which should have been in the post three days ago; he has some circumstance to relate, or some story to tell, and is brought up suddenly by finding that some important incident connected with the statement, some name, some date, some number, is gone.

This man's condition is in all respects incongruous. He is restless, though tired; and though he yearns for quiet, he is yet, when he obtains it, unable to face its concomitant dullness. Heaven help such an one! His is a sad case, but by no means an uncommon one. And it is not mere work that has reduced this man to so desperate a condition. Nine times out of ten it will be found that he has been engaged in some branch of labour which had made great demands upon his readiness. He is pledged to do a certain thing in a certain time. To be ready with certain results by a particular hour. He is a

man engaged in scientific pursuits, and every day his meteorological predictions must be ready. Or maybe he has to provide amusement for the public, and must be funny every week to order. This is the kind of work that kills. Or, if it does not kill a man at once, it knocks him up, reduces him into what is called "a low bad state"—a state which consigns him to the hands of the physician—an invalided state, to last, more or less, always. Then is he hidden—though there are months to be filled which can only be filled by his professional exertions—to leave off. He must abandon work for a time; and though this may mean abandoning income too, he is strictly forbidden to be anxious, or to have "anything on his mind."

But supposing an invalid to be able to discontinue his work for a time; supposing that he seeks relaxation by travelling, and in some sort finds it; how often it happens that the improvement which takes place in his condition turns out to be temporary. While he makes holiday, while he runs away from his cares and responsibilities, he does better; but when he returns to these, as he must do, sooner or later, does he not often find that the old symptoms gradually reappear, and do not his friends hear, after a while, that "So-and-so is in a bad way again"?

Nor do the better classes, as they are called, stand alone in feeling the strain which is encountered by those who take part in such forms of labour as may be called specialities of the day. My respected father remembers, perhaps, the case of a certain signal-man at one of our most frequented junctions, whose duties were so manifold and bewildering, and involved such intricate calculations of time and place—a half second wrong here, or a half inch wrong there, being sure to bring about the most dreadful consequences—that the man at last fell into a morbid condition about his work, and, being strained and bewildered to a degree far beyond his powers of endurance, remarked at last, with terrible calmness to one of his comrades, "He knew the day would come when he *must* make a mistake, and that when that day came he should most surely be killed"? This is quite a modern instance, and is no doubt fresh in your memory, as is also the end of the poor wretch who *did* at last make a mistake, and *was* at last killed.

Does not every one know of similar instances?

But what does all this come to? Are we to give up the "glorious gains" of modern times? Are we to cut down our telegraph-posts and coil away the magic wires? Are we to pull up the rails upon the iron-road, and make a "turn-pike" of it again? Shall we send our merchandise by the road-waggon and the barge, and our letters by the old mail-coach? Such questions are ridiculous. There is no going back in this world; no standing still even, with impunity.

The fact is, that these painful results of modern practices are in some sort inevitable. In every age the weak have gone to the wall.

Once, in the old time long past, the physically weak suffered. Might was right then, and brute force carried the day. The strongest men in body were capable of dealing with the institutions of *those* days, just as the strongest men in mind can grapple with the institutions of *these* days. Force of body then, force of mind and character now. Swift gaze, strong arm, nimble feet in the one age. Quick perception, firm nerve, versatile brain in the other age. There are men whose minds are exactly fitted by nature to carry away the prizes of these times, as there were men with bodies which enabled them to win those of a less refined period. The vigorous aggressive man of the feudal time made his way and gained his object with spear and battle-axe. The same thing happens now, only we go to work with weapons drawn from a less material armoury.

What is to become, then, of those who cannot be reckoned among the strongest of the strong? Are they to strain and tear their faculties to shreds, until such sad results are brought about as we have glanced at above? Or are they to drop, shouldered out of the contest altogether? They are to do neither the one thing nor the other. They should remain and try to do what they can, but by no means what they can't. How many achievements may now be crammed into the space of a single day. What journeyings, what multiplicity of incongruous business-transactions, what breakfasts in one part of the world, what suppers in another! I remember to have heard it said, by one who was a special worker in the most modern of all our fields of labour, that one of the commonest mistakes of the day is to suppose that, because in these times you can do things so much more quickly than they could be done formerly, therefore you can do *so many more things*. There is much truth in these words. Your mental acts, your decisions laboriously arrived at, are carried out with incredible swiftness; but can you multiply such acts and such decisions with equal rapidity, and not suffer for it? Why should our brains work more closely and quickly than they used, because our machinery does?

For this very reason that work is done more quickly than was once the case, men might take more rest now, than they did formerly, were it not for the existence of a certain great element in our social life, with the mention of which I propose to bring this letter to an end: I mean the luxury of the age, with which, it seems, that it behoves every man to keep pace. Here is the

real difficulty. Here is the explanation of the prevalence among us of those disorders which arise from an overtaxing of the powers. For how can a man be moderate in his labours, when his expenditure is immoderate; or how can he reduce the number of hours to be devoted to money-making, when all the time he can by possibility give to that laborious occupation is barely enough to meet the requirements of the day?

It is necessary, dear sir, that I should bring this letter, already a long one, to a close. Before doing so, however, I would ask you to observe, that in every case which has been cited, those who suffer by the introduction of modern institutions are the middle-aged and the elderly, who have not grown up along with those institutions, but who have, so to speak, been surprised and overtaken by them. Have a care then, my worthy sir, have a care, I entreat you, and leave the superintendence of all the more rapid transactions which belong to the business operations of the day to us of the new generation. We take things much more coolly than you can, we are less excitable, and much less is taken out of us than would be the case if we got into a state of fuss about everything, as some of our elders do.

I have not yet exhausted all that I have to say to you, but will reserve the rest for one or two future letters. Meanwhile I am, with the warmest desire for your well-being, which, believe me, I will spare no pains to secure,

Your affectionate Son,

P. CHESTERFIELD, Junior.

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